HOW TO READ BOOKS

Llewellyn Jones

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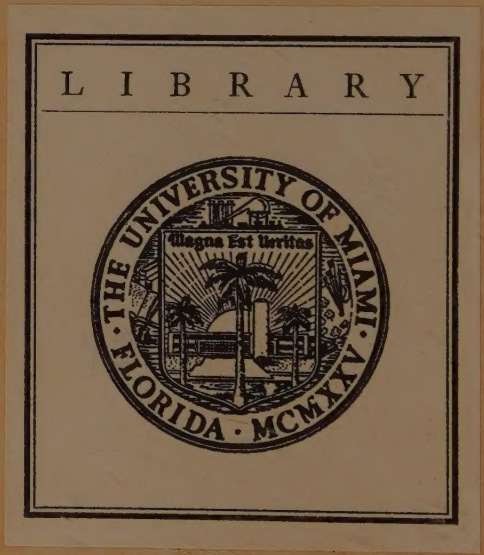

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Llewellyn Jones

AUTHOR OF
"HOW TO CRITICIZE BOOKS"
"FIRST IMPRESSIONS"
ETC.

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SUSAN WARREN WILBUR

Who helped considerably

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PREFATORY NOTE

WHEN some of my friends among booksellers read a previous volume of mine, "How to Criticize Books" they told me that the book should have been entitled "How to Read Books." It was too late then to change the title of that book but it is never too late to write another book. After all, the first book was primarily intended for the writer of book reviews, even though it was also addressed to the intelligent reader of books—since to be intelligent a reader must also be critical.

The present book on the contrary is addressed simply to the reader of books. And its aim is to help him to enjoy them — not to improve his mind or to urge him to change or purify his tastes. That process, if necessary, should be spontaneous. And I have purposely refrained from giving any of those lists of "the hundred best

books." That sort of thing has been done, and overdone, and besides I have no idea which hundred books really are the best. I do not even know which are the hundred best books for me and I have more than once flunked that simple examination which consists of the question: "Who is your favorite author?"

I have tried to write simply, and if the chapter on the technique of poetry looks formidable, that is only because diagrams and diacritical marks always do look formidable. The reader has only to read the examples of the various meters with a very slight pause after each division mark indicating the end of a foot, and he will have no trouble in following my demonstration. Poetry is a sort of music and there is just one way of reading any one line. I have given only so much technical notation as suffices to enable the reader to read lines of verse as their authors intended they should be read. And that he must do or he is not reading the poem that the author wrote.

HOW TO READ BOOKS

CHAPTER ONE

Overcoming Space and Time

THE point of view from which the following book is written is not that of self-education or self-improvement, but is primarily that of enjoyment. In so far as we can judge by the statistics covering the number of books bought every year in proportion to population, Americans are twelfth among civilized nations in their addiction to the printed book as a form of property — and even allowing for a great deal of reading from books held by libraries, this suggests that as a nation we have let the radio, the automobile, and the moving picture crowd books into a small corner of our mental lives.

I am sure that part of the blame for this situation is to be laid at the door of the teacher: through him the average person learns to associate books with textbooks for one thing, and, for another, to regard novels and other works of imagination as something uplifting or "highbrow"— so that there is a sort of psychological

hurdle to be leapt before he can bring himself to read them.

The argument of this book is that reading is one of the joys of life and also one of the utilities of life; that the ability to read books is the ability greatly to enlarge our lives and personalities; that there is an art of reading, which is very easily acquired; and that the result of acquiring that art may have effects as extraordinary as if one had acquired the ability to visit some other, better arranged, and more significant planet.

One or two of the latest philosophical systems make much of the fact that man is a tool-using animal. But a tool is only an extension of some animal muscular, aural or optical power. What really makes us unlike the animals is our imagination — that even more than our moral sense: the behavior of dogs to men often puts to shame the behavior of men to dogs.

Man alone has invented language and a way of recording meanings and hypotheses. Through language thought is made possible and imagination is freed. So much so that if you wish to make sure of the fact that you are more than an animal, read a book. That is one thing that no animal can do or can learn to do.

And furthermore, in reading a book, we es-

cape from those very factual conditions which in so many directions make us one with the animals. For like them we are confined within a definite environment spatially and within a definite time-span by memory. We live our lives in a few well-worn grooves. To be sure, in school we learned something of the past, and in the Sunday newspapers we can read glowing prophecies about the future. But our actual observation of life is confined to our family, our job, our fellow-townsmen. We gradually forget our history and our one or two foreign languages, and as we grow old our interests become more and more centered on economic security and bodily comfort.

At the same time our total environment is becoming ever more and more complex. As late as two hundred years ago men lived in small and largely self-sufficing communities. The wisdom of life could be handed down by tradition and was for the most part accepted on authority — perhaps for that reason we should not call it wisdom. A man learned his trade by apprenticeship; his trade determined his social status; that to a great extent determined his choice in marriage. Intellectually the average man was adequate to his situation.

To-day the average man lives in a world which

is utterly strange to him. No community is self-sufficing. The earthquake in Japan affected the plans of thousands of Americans about to build houses: it made a big difference to American lumber prices. A European who wants to brush his teeth is dependent, as often as not, on a Japanese or Chinese industry. The materials for a radio set come from all over the world.

We have, therefore, the choice of going it blindly and living a life the springs of which are hidden from us, or of being much more intelligent than our forefathers. If we are to know what we are doing and why, what is affecting our activities and our pocketbooks and why, we must think no longer in terms of our town or country but of our world. In other words, just as of old a man learned his trade by apprenticeship and the art of living by a wider apprenticeship — to tradition — so to-day, just as we no longer learn our trades by apprenticeship, but in trade or professional schools, we must learn the art of life not by imitation but through books.

The first use of the book, then, is utilitarian. A blacksmith may learn his trade by doing what he sees the master blacksmith do, and it may be drudgery when he has learned it. But if he reads a book on the subject he has lifted himself out of that drudgery into a realm of intelligence. Even

that very old and — as we have been taught — "instinctive" job of motherhood is now, by its advanced practitioners, no longer looked upon as something to be known instinctively but as something to be undertaken with the aid of the latest literature on the subject.

And so we may say that every intelligent person should have not one library but two: first a professional library having to do with the job he holds — what his work is about, how it is done, how it has been done in the past, and how it may conceivably be done — or, in this changing age, done away with — in the future; and second the books he reads for pleasure — a library to make him free of the world and of time.

I do not mean by this that books of imagination are intended to or should be used to free you, in the sense of cutting you loose from the so-called realities. The "ivory tower" theory of art, according to which art is the exploration of a realm cut off from everyday life, of "faery lands forlorn," is an inadequate theory, even though it may not be so bad as the opposing idea that art exists to teach us lessons.

What I mean is that, in the first place and before anything else, art and especially the art of literature gives us all sorts of possibilities of vicarious experience. As far as we need escape

from a dull environment art is an escape; but the important thing about art is not the fact that it is an escape from prosaic everyday life — gin may be that — but that it is an escape into something. As to what that realm is we shall inquire later. Here it will suffice to make the point and to make the further point that if we read merely to escape, without bothering into what realm we do escape — if we read, that is to say, to "kill time" — we are on the wrong track. I know that eminent persons, including Presidents, are wont, especially during campaigns, to take the public into their confidence about the books they read. And often they tell us that they enjoy detective stories.

Personally I feel about detective stories as the monarch felt about horse racing. His tale is repeated by John Dewey in "The Quest for Certainty"— where it is used to point the dubious theory that we never have purely theoretical interests. This king refused to go to see a horse race because, he said, he knew already the result of the race: the demonstration, to wit, of the fact that one horse can run faster than another horse. Detective stories, like watching horse races, kill time but they do little else.

And I am just getting old enough so that I am no longer willing to kill any of the time that

may be left to me. If any reader of this book is in the habit of doing things to "kill time" I cannot help condemning his conduct unless he justifies it in the only possible intelligent way: by stating that he does it with malice aforethought because he regards passage through time as an evil and does not believe in personal immortality. When you find a person "killing time" who calls himself a Christian, thereby stating, through implication, that he believes in immortal life, you have found an incarnate paradox.

As a matter of fact, what thoughtful reading does is not to kill time but to save its life by multiplying its past moments by a present which is, in that multiplication, made a richer present. All the time we spend in routine pursuits or in activities that are on a purely sensuous level is killed in the spending. I may enjoy my dinner today as I eat it, but it takes an effort of memory to recall yesterday's dinner and I cannot for the life of me recall what I had to eat a week ago Saturday. If I do happen to remember what I ate on a given occasion it was undoubtedly because I had dinner with some interesting person, we exchanged ideas, and so the occasion was made memorable.

It is only when the events of life are appropri-

ated by the mind, that we are investing and not spending time. And that is because while sensations are disparate — you can neither mix nor multiply the sensation of a toothache with the touch of velvet or the smell of sulphur dioxide — ideas all have elements in common and form endless chains, so that in so far as you live in the realm of ideas you live not from moment to moment but in an eternal present which carries your past along with it and is always giving you new aspects of that past.

In other words, if you live from moment to moment on a sensational basis, you have no lasting or real life at all. In so far as you really live, you live by and through ideas.

The contribution that reading makes to this sort of living is the theme of the following chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

The "Kinds" of Literature

It is debatable whether such a thing exists as art without thought, beauty that does not involve an idea; and a summary of the debate, or perhaps of one side of it, will be found in the next chapter. In the widest sense, literature is certainly not a pure art but a discipline which includes art at one end and pure thought at the other end — with action in between. The old classifications of literature into drama, the epic, the novel, the lyric, and of drama into its kinds: tragedy, pastoral, comedy, were never more than conveniences. When they were used as fixed types to which any new performance must correspond, they ceased to be conveniences and became nuisances.

As a matter of fact the classifications given above are artificial. They are of form rather than of content. A drama by Rabindranath Tagore may be predominantly lyrical and contemplative with no dramatic clash in it. A novel is

often called dramatic. A short story is in point of fact a one-act play with the stage directions expanded and printed along with the dialogue.

A more serious classification of literature, then, would be along the lines of content. It might run from the pure prose of a scientific treatise through the semi-prose of almost every sort of philosophy, except the very up-to-date kinds which depend on mathematical logic, through the drama and novel each in its degrees dealing with action, down to the lyric in which words are carefully chosen each for its sensuous as well as for its ideational value.

Such classification might cut across a number of these divisions according to the sort of psychological interests represented. It is a common error on the part of "practical" people who "seldom read," to imagine that reading is the occupation of a dreamy person, provided for him by the professional activities of another dreamy person — the author.

Actually the typical man of the world, the extravert, as it is now fashionable to call him, is just as well represented in literature as is the introvert. It would probably be going too far to say that drama is the art form of the extravert and the lyric that of the introvert, but drama at least does deal with action and does, in spite of

the efforts of Eugene O'Neill, have difficulties in dealing with inner states. If the typical lyric poet is an introvert, Shakespeare was certainly an extravert. And so, for that matter, was Milton.

All of which simply leads up to the point that to express one's propensities for or against reading in terms of the "kinds" of literature is to be illogical. The man who tells you that he does not like poetry does not mean what he says. Meet him in the smoking room of a Pullman car and he will probably recite verses to you — limericks. What he means when he says he does not like poetry is that he does not like the samples that were offered him in school.

Three of the rather definite "kinds" of literature that I shall mention here — leaving others to individual chapters — are those in which literature as an art steps out of its own borders and ranges in neighboring territory; they are biography, criticism, in which literature is ancillary to historical and to philosophical principles — and the drama, in which literature confines itself to the possibilities of what actually, or at least ideally, can be put on a stage, so leading us into another art.

As I pointed out in "How to Criticize Books," biography has recently taken over some of the

technique of the novel, though I do not mean by that to imply that it has become fiction necessarily. But much of this cleverly written biography is the work not of original students of the life portrayed but of clever writers who have read the original biographical works or some of them, and rewritten them in the new manner. The reader of biography, then, should always find out whether he is reading a scholarly work or a second-hand work.

As I write, a new book on Lincoln by Emil Ludwig is announced. When the announcement was first made, an American historian, who happened also to be an editorial writer on a New York paper, wrote a short editorial remarking how interesting it would be, after we had read our native-written lives of Lincoln, and Lord Charnwood's life from an English point of view, to have Lincoln treated from a German point of view. He ended his editorial by wishing Emil Ludwig a happy sojourn in America during the five years or so that it would be necessary for him to live in this country in order to study the backgrounds and the documents. Herr Ludwig, as a matter of fact, was leaving America very shortly after that editorial was written.

Now some people will be predisposed in favor of that work because Emil Ludwig is what they

call a great biographer. Has he not written the lives of Napoleon, Bismarck, and Jesus Christ? — to mention only the more important ones. But a little reflection will suffice to show us that in the traditional sense he cannot be a great biographer. The only really great names in biography are the names of people who wrote one life and let it go at that. Did Boswell's practice in writing the life of Samuel Johnson give him a head start over Renan in writing a life of Jesus? It emphatically did not. And so, although I have not seen Emil Ludwig's life of Lincoln, and though I cannot say in advance that it will not be an interesting book, I think I can fairly say that it cannot be an authoritative book. For that we shall still depend on Mr. Beveridge for the political Lincoln and perhaps on Carl Sandburg for the personal and idiosyncratic Lincoln.

The reader of biographies ought also to be on the lookout for propaganda and sectional points of view. Oswald Garrison Villard has written a life of John Brown which shows Brown as the hero, almost a saint, that he is usually supposed to be. Lately, however, a biography by a Southerner has appeared in which John Brown is pictured as a horse thief. Possibly there are some cases where a foreign biographer might well be invited in.

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Too many people have assumed that the newer biographies are iconoclastic or even scurrilous. The reason for this is, of course, in some cases merely that students have chipped off the old whitewash from some of our statues. Of recent Washington biographies as an example of this, I have already spoken in "How to Criticize Books." But the other day I noticed the complaint made against the new biographies in general, with Washington cited as an instance, and the argument for the opposition stated.

It was to this effect: that the speaker (who was the Secretary of State of Illinois) did not care, for himself, whether Washington did or did not cut down a cherry tree. And he thought that the new biographers should not care for such details either. Rather they should ask themselves, will the effect of telling this or that story, or of omitting this or that, be such as to inspire youth with a reverence for our great men, or such as to give them a cynical view of "greatness"? He was all for the inspiration. The trouble with that idea is that one of the highest ethical ideals is truth. And if you hold up to youth an ideal of manhood that is obviously silly, a mere stuffed image, youth will soon find out that you are lying — that real men and women are not the paragons you pretend. Then they become cynical with a

vengeance; for not only the Washingtons fall but you fall too as a moral authority.

As a matter of fact, the new biographies are as likely to replace reputations that the popular mind has blackened as to spoil saints. Thus in one of the most noteworthy of recent years, Mary Agnes Best's "Thomas Paine: Apostle of Liberty," the man to whom the popular mind still applies Roosevelt's epithet of "dirty little atheist" is shown to have been: (1) Meticulously neat and clean in an age when many people were not, (2) Taller than Mr. Roosevelt, (3) A believer in God.

Matthew Arnold's remark about poetry, that it was criticism of life, might better have been made of biography, which whenever it becomes more than the merest chronicle is a direct criticism of life — a sort of laboratory criticism, as it were. And like all other forms of criticism, it is a continuous and necessary process in intelligent living.

This does not mean that we ought to live by standards, for criticism in spite of what many people think is not measuring things up against standards. Even in morals, the setting up of standards (as Warner Fite has shown in his "Moral Philosophy") is always a matter of social utility rather than of real morality, the cri-

terion of which is whether one knows what one does.

It is often assumed that literary criticism, if it is not to be a matter of standards, must fall back on impressionism — be a mere statement of the critic's feelings in the presence of a work of art. But the critic need not jump from one extreme to the other. For a work of art, as I shall try to show later, is not merely an isolated "expression" of the artist's vision. It is tied up with life, depends for its form and also for its content on the artist's sense of life and on his intelligence as well as upon the sensitiveness of his nerves. But the artist has a particular and personal point of view. The three soldiers, for instance, of whom John Dos Passos wrote in his first novel, were just as many aspects of those three soldiers as could be filtered through the lenses and prisms of the author's personality, and recreated by him. The three soldiers again in the consciousness of any reader of that novel were just as much of Mr. Dos Passos' recreated soldiers as the experience and interests and predisposition of that reader enabled him to reconstruct in his imagination.

By which time, it will be seen, we are a long way off from the original three who started the whole process going. As this is a book for read-

ers of books, I shall not inquire into the function of criticism as a means for encouraging, scolding, correcting Mr. Dos Passos in his portraitures of soldiers — or of cities. I shall simply point out that criticism is important as a part of one's reading because it not only clarifies but multiplies it. You read about Mr. Dos Passos' soldiers in the light of his sympathy for them. You will either echo that sympathy or you may react violently against it and remark that these men were not good soldiers. In either event why not attempt to see them from a different point of view as well as from your instinctive one? In the fullest sense, indeed, you have not read that novel until you have read a criticism of it written by a person who believes in the military virtues and perhaps a criticism by a psychiatrist, or at least by some one who knows enough about human psychology so that he can tell us how expected or how far from what is to be expected in human conduct were the reactions of those men.

In poetry even more than in the novel, this is necessary. Think of the volumes of criticism that have been written on Shakespeare and on Keats. Subtract from that mass, of course, all the merely pedantic criticism, the study of sources, the drawing of parallels with the technique of

earlier work in the "kinds" represented, all the mere study of the evolution of literary patterns. Take only that criticism which is æsthetic or philosophical. All of it represents personal reactions to Shakespeare and Keats that will supplement and enrich yours, or that may give you a new approach by arousing your active disagreement.

In the realms of philosophy and the social sciences the process of critical checking up is even less a luxury and more a necessity. For here the question of objective truth enters, and that of the interpretation of terms. Also the important question of hidden implications — implications, that is, hidden from the reader who is not familiar with some neighboring field but revealed to some one familiar with that field. For instance, I have read and even written a review of John Dewey's "The Quest for Certainty" and yet I do not consider that for my own greatest satisfaction I have read the book at all until I have also read criticisms of it written by: (1) Other instrumentalists; (2) Idealistic philosophers of both the absolutist and personalistic types; (3) Naturalists and scientists who are interested only in science and do not take sides philosophically. Only in this way can I discover what variation of meaning may be put into the

terms Dewey uses. And only in that way can I find out all the implications inherent in what he actually says.

With creative artists their biographies should form part of this critical reading. It is all very well to say that a work of art, if successful, is a thing complete in itself. That is true; and to take Shakespeare's plays as documents from which we may reconstruct his biography (as both Brandes and Frank Harris have done) is futile. Indeed it has led Brandes (as Croce points out in his study of Shakespeare) to say that "Macbeth" possesses but "slight interest" because he does not feel in that play the influence of the Shakespeare whom he has imagined in terms of his life.

But on the other hand, though works of art may be, and drama must be, impersonal in form, they are certainly personal in origin. Unless we knew at least something of Shakespeare's life and times we should not only fail to understand the sonnets, but we should fail to give the proper meaning to many of the concepts and even the words that are used in the plays.

I have spoken of a common assumption that criticism, if it is not to be regarded as the search for an imposition of standards, must go to the

other extreme and become purely impressionistic. This assumption has been made the basis of an American movement in criticism which calls itself Humanism, and as the movement is an aggressive one and very much in the air just now it may be worth while to assess its claims and its accomplishments. In the first place the reader should be warned that humanism in this sense has nothing to do with and is even violently opposed to the philosophic position which has been called pragmatism or instrumentalism in America and humanism by its English proponent, F. C. S. Schiller. The social gospel of Professor Dewey, indeed, the proponents of this literary humanism would call humanitarian, and humanitarianism is anathema to them. They are equally opposed, of course, to the liberal religious movement known as humanism.

Their brand of Humanism is indeed opposed to almost every school of modern philosophy, being, in fact, a reactionary movement. Its chief proponents are Paul Elmer More, who has developed it in his two series of "Shelburne Essays"; Irving Babbitt, who has developed it in his works, "The New Laocoön," "Rousseau and Romanticism," and "Democracy and Leadership"; and Norman Foerster with his book "American Criticism." These and the other members of the

school are all, it will be noted, academic by profession. To them we may add, with reservations, the American poet T. S. Eliot, now residing in England, who disagrees with them because he thinks that their position cannot be sustained without the aid of religion, preferably a state religion. Wherefore he himself, in his book, "For Lancelot Andrewes," announces that for a safer refuge from "the waste land" of contemporary life, he has not only embraced classicism in literature but royalism in politics, and Anglo-Catholicism in religion. Though, for that matter, Paul Elmer More has recently told us that through Platonism he has gone back to Christianity; and Mr. Babbitt, complaining that Mr. Eliot has misinterpreted his aloofness from religion, has remarked that, under the right conditions, the Roman Catholic communion might be the safest place for all of us.

The fact that these men are looking back to this or that form of religious discipline does not of itself signify much. The point is: what motive causes them to look back, or to go back?

That motive might be æsthetic. If we heard that George Santayana had publicly joined the Catholic communion, for instance, every reader of his books would know just about what it meant. But the Humanist glance backward is

not motivated by æsthetic considerations. It is motivated by fear — fear of modern philosophical tendencies and fear of the mob which may get out of hand and interfere with one's privileges. For the mob, as these men would have us believe, is becoming naturalistic in its philosophy and wishes to live by the light of nature and do what it likes. As a matter of fact the "mob" is a myth and naturalists in philosophy and the economic determinists in social theory are all highly moral people. From them you get such strict and edifying doctrine as I once saw preached at the end of a book on genetics: that we must live in constant awareness of the fact that we are but temporary envelopes of the immortal germ plasm: any conduct which tends to lower the quality of that is bad conduct. And we all know the Puritan strictness with which Marxian determinists judge human conduct. But the Mores and the Babbitts prefer to regard all naturalistic doctrines of life as doctrines of personal license. To them mechanistic or naturalistic philosophy does not mean Ostwald or Jacques Loeb but means Theodore Dreiser and writers like him — all of whom are thought to teach universal sexual license.

Messrs. Babbitt and More, on the other hand, not only dislike Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis, but

they feel that Nature herself does not quite come up to the standards of Harvard and Back Bay civilization. The philosophical side of their position is perhaps best summed up in Paul Elmer More's recent work, "The Demon of the Absolute." This is not an attack on objective idealism as one might suppose from the title, but an attack on all those philosophies which go to any logical conclusion. According to Mr. More, if you say that reality is matter exclusively, you are just as wrong as if you say that reality is God exclusively. If you say that the intellect is adequate to grasp reality you are just as wrong as if you say that the intellect cannot comprehend reality. In other words he does not believe in any possible synthesis of experience but thinks that there are — to borrow a striking phrase — "rifts in the universe." Therefore pure science is as impossible as pure art. Continuity, the one great conception which evolutionists from Democritus to Whitehead have been trying to build up, is a myth and a mirage.

In a way, that may be true and in certain senses undoubtedly is true; pluralism is a respectable philosophical position. But in Mr. More's and Mr. Babbitt's application of the idea it is certainly rendered false. For Mr. More — and Mr. Babbitt follows him here — makes out

of his discontinuities what is, for all practical purposes, a dualism. On one side of it is everything else, and on the other, man as human. What is it to be human? Common sense would say that if you are pursuing any activity, say riding in an automobile, you are living, fulfilling your function, as long as you ride, and that you are less than living, temporarily dead, one might say, as long as a red light ahead causes you to stop. To these gentlemen, on the other hand, the green light which says Go is the voice of the devil, the red light which says Stop is the voice of God. This sounds so unbelievable that I must substantiate it by quotation. In "The Drift of Romanticism" Mr. More says that our impulses (that is to say, Nature speaking in us) are animal and inchoate, one warring on another. That is, of course, in a way true, and common sense tells us that we must adjust their claims. But that is not enough for Mr. More. There is, he says, in man — or at least in good men like himself — an "inner check" and:

"It is not the mere blocking of one impulse by another which is a quality of the confusion of the flux itself, but a restraint upon the flux exercised by a force contrary to it. . . . What, if anything, lies behind the inner check, what it is, why

and how it acts or neglects to act, we cannot express in rational terms."

This conflict, according to Norman Foerster, is "insusceptible to reconciliation." These gentlemen condemn all romantic art and literature because it is an expression of the expansion of our impulses — indeed a recent writer of their school has gone so far as to remark in an essay that when he speaks in that essay of romantic art he means "bad art."

Instead of arguing at length about these ideas let us see at a glance what they really mean in practice. Again the most convenient exhibit is Paul Elmer More. In his volume of Shelburne Essays, "Aristocracy and Justice," he has one essay inspired by the events and arguments incident to the famous Rockefeller mining strike in Colorado. In that strike, it will be remembered, strikers and their women and children were subjected to the horrors of a civil war. Readers who do not remember the circumstances have only to look at the more recent events in the Southern textile mills' strike to see what was going on. Mr. More begins his essay by quoting an incident which he calls "savage." Was it the shooting of women and children? No, it was a speech by Morris Hillquit in New York, criticizing the Rockefellers!

And then he himself proceeds to criticize them. They have argued, he says, that in warring against the strikers they are defending the right of workingmen to accept any job on any terms. But that, he says, is weak. They should have defended their course on the ground of the absolute rights of *property:*

"A hundred years ago, in England or America, their present attitude would have been impossible; they would have appealed boldly to the public, to their public, on the basis of sheer property rights. . . .

"*To the civilized man the rights of property are more important than the right to life.*

"But for reasons which lie deeply embedded in the sources of our modern life, we are in great and continual peril of a humanitarianism springing from a mistaken conception of the *jus naturale* . . . but in the face of all appeals of sentiment and all reasonings of abstract justice, society must learn again to-day that it cannot legislate contrary to the decrees of Fate. In this way, looking at the larger good of society, we may say that the dollar is more important than the man, *and that the rights of property are more important than the right to life.*"

The italics in both cases are Mr. More's.

It will be noticed that Mr. More has capital-

ized Fate. The dualist, the man who has told us that man's divinity is the inner check which says No to natural impulses, now becomes a monist — where money is involved. In morals, in literature, in art, we must say No to Nature. But where the pocketbook is involved we must follow Nature's law of remorseless struggle, no matter how many workingmen we have to shoot down in doing so.

The fact of the matter is that this so-called Humanism is simply a movement of black reaction. Indeed in its latest phases it has taken into itself all the other reactionary movements, including anti-semitism. That it stood from the beginning for a partly hereditary and partly territorial "aristocracy" may be judged from the following paragraph from "The Demon of the Absolute," a paragraph which only smoothness of style and polite word selection prevent from being the merest Billingsgate.

After speaking of the "æsthetes" in contemporary literature, including Amy Lowell and James Branch Cabell, whom the author does not like any too well but of whom he speaks with respect because, after all, Miss Lowell is a Lowell and of New England and Mr. Cabell a Southern gentleman — Mr. More proceeds:

"As a contrast the realists who throng the left

wing of the modern school come almost without exception from small towns sprinkled along the mid-Western states from Ohio to Kansas, where for the most part they have grown up quite innocent of education in any such sense as would be recognized in Paris or London. It would not be easy to exaggerate the importance of the fact that in letters they are self-made men with no inherited background of culture. One of them, indeed, Sinclair Lewis, coming out of Sauk Center, Minnesota, has a degree from Yale University; but intellectually he is perhaps the crudest member of the group; cruder, for instance, than Theodore Dreiser who got most of his education in the streets of Chicago and from the free libraries of this and that town; or than Sherwood Anderson who apparently owes his acquaintance with the alphabet to the grace of God."

Ten or more years ago, the late Stuart Pratt Sherman, then a professor at Illinois, was a member of this group. But contact with the perhaps small but growing attempt of a mid-western university to make democracy an actuality, taught Mr. Sherman better. He gradually drew away from the group and when he went to New York to become literary editor of the *Herald-*

Tribune he pretty thoroughly recanted — as one may learn from his "Life and Letters."

Logically, of course, the whole movement is based on the fallacy that if we do not accept this new version of the Puritan idea of original sin, our only alternative is to welter in a nature that is seen as only a flux of animal impulses. The whole moral content of experience is lifted out of experience — where, after all, it arose — transferred to the absolute domain of Messrs. More's and Babbitt's private minds with their prejudices, and then experience, so denuded, is held up to caricature. Croce is quoted as saying that "The artist is always above blame morally and above censure philosophically" (More in "The Demon of the Absolute") but the fact is carefully ignored that Croce is speaking there of the artist only in the moment of his functioning as an artist. It is made to appear as if Croce preached a doctrine of moral anarchy for the artist. But the whole point of Croce's philosophy is that every man is at once an artist, a thinker, a doer of practical works, and an ethical judge of what is done. The æsthetic factor taken alone is an abstraction and not a reality.

In the same way, Irving Babbitt in his study of Rousseau, to whose romanticism he traces every evil of the modern world from votes for

women to the severe winter of 1930, abstracts his romanticism as if it were a virus. But in that pure form romanticism simply does not exist. Every artist is in part classic and in part romantic. And when Jesus of Nazareth remarked that he came not that men might be given an "inner check" but that they might have life and have it more abundantly he was just as truly a romanticist as was Rousseau. Mr. Babbitt might conceivably call that illustration unfair because after all Jesus Christ has now been safely institutionalized.

Now it is true that you can oppose to humanism in this sense a complete naturalism. That is what Theodore Dreiser does — although in his latest book, "A Gallery of Women," he tells us that he has come to believe also in a directing intelligence behind the mechanism, his evidence being that an old woman told his fortune and it came true — and mechanism numbers many respectable biologists and psychologists among its advocates.

But you do not have to take this attitude of "either or." You may prefer to sit on neither horn of the dilemma. You may be an instrumentalist in Dewey's sense, believing that each individual is indeed a natural phenomenon, but believing also that Nature is purposive and that

we are her agents. In that event you will regard every work of art as a new experiment in possible living; as at once an enjoyable consummation of experience and a hint for new directions of experience. Or, like Croce himself, you may be an idealist, or you may be a Hegelian idealist and hold that art is the "Idea" or an aspect of the Absolute made manifest to sense through expression in sensuous terms.

In fact I should be inclined to think that the general point of this book could be called humanistic. Certainly the contemporary philosopher who has most affected my own thinking, Warner Fite, could be called a humanist — but his doctrines: individualism, morality as self-knowledge, art as a way of entering into reality, are as far apart as they could be from those of Messrs. Babbitt and More. Indeed even the avowed disciples of Croce have been misrepresented by these gentlemen. In "The Demon of the Absolute" Mr. More says that Mr. Spingarn teaches that "art is only expression and criticism only impression." And Mr. Babbitt in his essay on "Criticism in America" says that "not much is left of the values of civilized life when Mr. Spingarn has finished enumerating the things that must be thrown overboard if the creator is to express himself adequately, and

the 'new' or 'æsthetic' critic is to partake of the creator's thrill and reëxpress it."

Both of these remarks are sheer misrepresentation. Alain T. Peters in "A Spingarn Enchiridion" (Minaret Press), has answered them by quoting passage after passage from Mr. Spingarn, of which the following are typical:

"The modern critic has learnt to distinguish clearly between art, philosophy, history, religion, morals, not for the purpose of denying but of establishing their essential unity in the life of the spirit."

"I am *not* an advocate of æstheticism, in criticism or anything else. I have tried to make it clear that I regard æstheticism as an even graver critical vice than moralism. I have tried to make it clear that I regard impressionism as no less inadequate than the dogmatic criticism traditionally opposed to it. I do *not* believe that criticism is expression in the sense in which art is expression, or that the critic who merely expresses himself serves the true function of criticism. . . ."

But we have examined the red light long enough. After all, red stop lights are a necessary evil and should not be deified.

The realm of literature in which the bounds have been strictest and where they are being

overleapt with the most interesting results is undoubtedly the drama. From the classical and orthodox point of view the drama must obey certain Aristotelian rules of unity of time and place. But Shakespearian plays do not fit into the forms of Greek plays, and to-day we find Eugene O'Neill and others dramatizing inner states of mind. Indeed Shakespeare had done this in the soliloquy, and what Mr. O'Neill has done in "Strange Interlude" is to revive the soliloquy and simply inform the audience in advance that certain parts of the play are to be taken as thought, not spoken.

But in Pirandello, the Italian dramatist whose best-known play is "Six Characters in Search of an Author," we have something much more subtle than that. Pirandello's main thesis is that we live by fictions, each in his own fictional world. Other people are the raw material of our fictional world and we in turn are taken up and transformed in their fictional worlds. Therefore we can never judge them as they are — for we do not know their fictional scheme of things — and they can never judge us. Not even by our actions — for any one action may be interpreted this way or that way. But drama depends on actions, on the actual uttered word of a character, a word which is always accompanied by

"business." And so, says Pirandello, drama — in the sense, that is, in which we usually think of it, as the revelation of character through action — is impossible.

Now theoretically, one would suppose that a dramatist having reached this conclusion, would shut up shop — become a novelist, perhaps. But Pirandello uses drama itself to prove the limitations of drama. In "Six Characters in Search of an Author" he presents us with six figures which have been rejected by the playwright in whose imagination they were born. Their complex tragedy was too much for the dramatist — he could not shape their destinies as he had meant to — and so he abandons them. But they cannot assent to this; their tragedy oppresses them and they wish to "express" it. So they break in upon a rehearsal of a play and "sell themselves" to the stage manager and his company. We will give you, they tell him, a real play. He is persuaded and to each of his actors he assigns one of their parts. They give the actors the situations and tell them what is supposed to happen. But the play, as given by these actors, is something else. For the actors are not these characters but only themselves, and they cannot be otherwise.

Again in "Right You Are, If You Think So" Pirandello presents us with a dramatic situation

which puzzles the gossips of a small Italian town but which ought to be easily soluble. A newly appointed official comes to town and leases an apartment for his mother-in-law, but keeps his wife secluded on the fifth floor of a tenement. Her mother is never allowed to approach her and may only shout a word of greeting from the ground floor, or send up a note or a gift. Yet the son and mother-in-law are apparently the best of friends. A mystery — the one thing the town cannot abide. And the townspeople, being realists, think they can solve it by appropriate inquiry, except one among them who is a relativist (and Pirandello might better be called a relativist than a skeptic) and who tells them that the mystery is insoluble. And we must note that it is insoluble not because it is complex but just because it is personal. So the realists decide to take the shortest road: they will question the parties concerned. The mother-in-law answers willingly: Soon after Ponza's marriage her daughter was taken ill and the two were separated for a time. He imagined his wife dead and went insane from grief. When his wife was brought back he refused to believe the fact. So by the connivance of his mother-in-law he was, after a time, induced, as he thought, to marry again — another woman, as he thinks, but really

his first and only wife. But he is so afraid that he will lose his second wife that he keeps her practically a prisoner, and even his mother-in-law is not allowed to go near her.

A plausible tale which fits all the facts — and the townspeople are satisfied until suddenly Ponza bursts in upon a group of them. Has his mother-in-law, he asks, been that way and has she told them — ? They confirm his suspicions. Then he tells his tale. His mother-in-law is crazy. Soon after his marriage his wife died, and when later his mother-in-law met him with his second wife she was sure that her daughter had not died — that his second wife was really his first. And so he has to keep his second wife away from her because she cannot bear the strain of receiving the demonstrations of love that are really meant for a woman who is dead. Again the story fits the facts. The realists are puzzled and the relativist tells them that the drama being one of souls cannot be understood by others than its actors:

"Can't you understand that? She has created for him or he for her, a world of fancy which has all the earmarks of reality itself, and in this fictitious reality they get along perfectly well, and in full accord with each other; and this world of fancy, this reality of theirs, no docu-

ment can possibly destroy because the air they breathe is of that world. For them it is something they can see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and touch with their fingers. Oh, I grant you — if you could get a death certificate or a marriage certificate [in the play we are told that these have, as a matter of brute fact, been burned] or something of that kind, you would be able to satisfy that stupid curiosity of yours. Unfortunately you can't get it. And the result is that you are in the extraordinary fix of having before you, on the one hand, a world of fancy, and on the other, a world of reality, and you, for the life of you, are not able to distinguish one from the other."

Again in "Each in His Own Way" Pirandello gives us a play within a play, and we see how the fictional portrayal of their conduct — which had a scandalous interest and has been utilized by a dramatist — affects the two people involved, who happen to be in the audience. Again it is a case of what we call "real life" subordinating itself to what we call fiction.

Those, like Pirandello's other longer plays, are examples of drama forcing itself into what have hitherto been regarded as undramatic channels, making new ways for itself that it may follow more closely the windings of human caprice

and subjectivity. But another modern play, one of the greatest of the last two hundred years, shows us drama leaving the stage altogether and taking unto itself not only poetic but epic form and the form of prose epic as well.

As the reader may have guessed, I mean Thomas Hardy's "The Dynasts." And I have actually read an unfavorable criticism of the work based on the argument that Hardy had "mixed the kinds" and that in consequence his drama was no longer dramatic. To be sure the play cannot be staged and this not only on account of its length — "three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes" — but because it is now in a room, now across miles of land, now on sea, and now in the upper air, the dwelling place of the "phantom intelligences" which act the parts of a commenting chorus. The work thus becomes philosophy in addition to being drama and epic.

"The Dynasts" covers the ten years of the Napoleonic threat and fall, and yet it can hardly be said to be a drama of Napoleon: rather it is a play of the Immanent Will of Hardy's philosophic imagination, with Napoleon as one of its unwitting instruments.

CHAPTER THREE

Æsthetics in General

It is possible to read books, listen to music, look at pictures, even to paint pictures oneself, and do it all naïvely without troubling either to classify or to explain one's conduct. But even in those realms, and certainly in other realms, "the unexamined life is not worth living." Indeed if we do not know why we do things we shall hardly know how to do them. And if we do things only to kill time — well, in that event inquiry into the quality of the things would not be of much moment. Though even then there is an implication in our conduct, namely that we are pessimists.

Serious art has, by some, been regarded as an "ivory tower" of refuge from a world which is hostile to or at best indifferent to man's aspirations. Others, sentimentalists and mystics, have asked us to regard art as a method of getting into rapport with "Reality" as opposed to the illusion-ridden appearance of things, and they

ask us therefore to approach the artist as a Seer. This theory is comparatively easy for any one to hold whose idea of an artist is based on a portrait of Tennyson in his whiskers and toga.

Æsthetics may be studied as a branch of general philosophy. Or interest in it may be confined to the help it may be toward appreciating the art which we experience. Let it be said at the start, however, that that help will be chiefly negative in character; that is to say, no theory of æsthetics will ever cause us to experience an æsthetic reaction. But a good æsthetic theory will help, by the language with which it provides us, to explain what we like or do not like about a work of art. It will also relate our experiences of art to our other experiences and enable us to discriminate between what is art and what is something else masquerading as art.

In this chapter I shall try to outline a sort of eclectic theory of æsthetics, with especial reference, of course, to literature, that shall depend as little as possible on any philosophical presuppositions, and that will give, as much as any theory can, some sort of scale by which the reader may orient his various æsthetic experiences.

The question of æsthetics is very much com-

plicated because it must cover two quite different sorts of experience and each of them from two points of view. The points of view are those of the maker of a work of art and those of the appreciator of it. The two sorts of experience may be typified respectively by the act of looking at a diamond and the act of reading Tolstoy's "War and Peace."

Of course you may look at a diamond in more than one way. You may poise it on your finger and then reach for a scale and say "Twenty carats." As you do this, however, your attitude is not æsthetic. But if you just look at it, catch the light reflected from it — admire it and more or less forget financial considerations for the moment, you are then enjoying it æsthetically. You are not concerned with its origin and history. That it is a form of carbon is not to the point. You are for the time being out of the world and absorbed in that little world of light and broken color. The diamond, as Leibniz might have said, is a windowless monad — you look into it but not through it. However much you may be thrilled by it, the experience is an isolated experience, complete in itself and without any implications by which it could be compared to other experiences.

On the other hand when you read "War and Peace" you are not dealing with a monad. You are dealing with something leading to and from the outer world. Generals are mentioned of whom you have read in history. People unknown to you but with whom you sympathize: because they are like people you have met; because they are growing old, and so are you; because they are in love, and you have been; because they die, and you have seen death — crowd its pages. Or rather, through the symbols on the page they come to life in your mind, and you know that they do this because they once lived in Tolstoy's mind and that they lived in his mind because he had met these people, or at least their traits and vicissitudes in other people, and had then imaginatively re-created them in terms of his own life experience.

Now that is a very different sort of thing from looking at a diamond. Any theory of art that is to take in both of those experiences must be broad, tolerant, not too anxious to over-simplify the problem. But unfortunately theories of art, when they have not been created by professional philosophers as parts of their systems, have been created by people who were more interested in diamonds than in books or in books than in diamonds.

As a result they have approached one of two extremes.

One class of theories is based on the idea that beauty is a property of physical objects — a matter, perhaps, of proper visual proportions or proper tonal ratios. The latest and the most extreme of this group is Clive Bell's theory that the æsthetic emotion has no relation to what we call "life"—that is, to love, death, taxes, babies, cabbages, war-making, peace conferences, ice-hockey and so forth — but that it is our response to "significant form." And by significant form Mr. Bell means form that does not signify anything; if the form in a picture signifies a cow you must forget that and concentrate on the abstract space-relationships. The only function of the cow in the picture is to help the artist by suggesting pure form. If you like the picture because it reminds you of a cow you used to milk back on the farm, you are getting a mere literary reaction, something anecdotal, and a photograph would have done the trick as well.

For looking at diamonds Mr. Bell's theory of significant form would appear to have a high degree of probability, particularly the first time you heard it. But when the principle is made basic for all æsthetics, either a novel becomes a

matter of formal proportions, with its subject degraded to a mere convenience, or else literature must be ruled out of the arts. Mr. Bell does not have quite the assurance to rule literature out, but he does tell us that literature is an impure art since it must have a subject matter made up of recognizable objects from the world of every-day experience, and can consequently not lift us to the pure heights of æsthetic ecstasy that, say, a picture of a bunch of bananas can, provided we forget that it is based on bananas, do not become hungry, and think only in terms of curve counterpointed against curve, line against line, color against color.

On the other hand a theorist whose interests are literary, George Bernard Shaw, for example, is likely to define art as criticism of life. Mr. Shaw indeed still holds to the almost altogether exploded didactic theory according to which art is a method, by sensuously appealing means, of teaching us lessons. To Mr. Shaw art that has no moral is decadent and the people who spend their time on it are wasters.

One trouble with this theory is that it is likely to encourage some very bad art. Probably some of the worst poetry that ever got into print will be found in the older hymn books — much of

it over the name of the Reverend Isaac Watts. I do not know who wrote the hymn beginning

Crown him with many crowns,
The lamb upon his throne.

But if you will visualize for just a moment a lamb sitting on a throne precariously balancing on his head even three crowns (and of the simplest design) you will agree with me that that is not good poetry. The fact that a real lamb is not meant makes it no better. And what could be worse than some of the novels of Harold Bell Wright? Yet they aim to convey the most exalted moral lessons.

However, when you find such a theory as the didactic nature of art not only held by responsible people but widely diffused among the naïve you may be sure that it has its basis in some sort of a reality: there are few absolute errors at large, for absolute errors die by killing their hosts. In one sense art does have a didactic function.

Indeed, in the general sense that art is something through which you look at, rather than into, all art is didactic; in the sense in which such authors as Harold Bell Wright try to make it so, no art is didactic — for any work of art

is but a single instance of whatever thesis the author is trying to prove; and a single instance proves nothing.

To that point, however, we shall return. At present we must ask whether what we experience in looking at a diamond and what we experience in looking through an author's eyes at a part of life, can be brought under the same rubric. Most æstheticians try to do so; a few, among them the late Rupert Brooke, are pluralists in the matter and say that looking at a play, reading poetry, watching a sunset or looking at a picture cannot be equated in the same terms.

However these and the other varieties of artistic experience do have things in common. For one thing, an artistic experience is always in some sense a unity: we look at one sunset, at one flower or at one bouquet of many flowers; we read one story, or two stories, a plot and a subplot, woven into one: the two are related and there is an interacting group of characters. Even in a loosely made narrative like "The Pickwick Papers" we have one leading character, and even a book of disconnected essays may be brought together into one experience if we are made aware of one point of view running through them.

Then in every work of art there is rhythm of

some sort: the rhythm of sound in music, of word-sounds in poetry and prose, of spatial proportions in the graphic and plastic arts, of bodily movements in the dance. Even in a novel there is rhythm of plot structure and in a well-made movie there are all sorts of rhythms — plastic, emotional, plot-structure, and so forth.

Those rhythms, it will be seen, run from simple physical and physiological rhythms to intellectual ones — the rise and fall of the plot structure and the emotional rises, falls, climaxes and quiet places. But the total work of art builds those and its other elements into a structure that is more than rhythmical, that is logical and complete. We are so likely to think of art in emotional or semi-religious terms that we often overlook the fact that it is more strictly governed by logic than almost any other human activity. And the essence of logic is obedience to the course of the argument; wish-thinking is ruled out. While an artist is free to handle any subject that comes within his experience, he is not free to do what he likes with it. If at a certain point in his painting the painter puts in a mass of blue, that mass demands that something else balance it. Many other things would balance it, but from among the possibilities, this and that may be ruled out because they conflict with some other ele-

ment in the painting. Thus the artist is governed by the logic of his subject, and the outcome is characterized as "inevitable."

Sometimes a story inevitably has an unhappy ending, and a magazine editor tells the author that his readers demand a happy ending, and the author removes his logical ending and tacks on a happy one. The result is something which jars upon the sensitive reader — for his mind has seen in advance the inevitability, and the sudden wrench shatters for him the artistic experience.

But on the other hand when a work of art retains its logical unity intact, our feeling after reading or seeing it is one of intellectual satisfaction. I say intellectual rather than emotional, for the emotional effect of a work of art may be painful. It took a Frenchman, Emile Faguet, to explain tragedy on the ground that we are all malicious at heart and like to see people hurt. The saner explanation of tragedy is that we do not like to see people hurt or killed, but that when we can see such disasters not as we see them in life — as something inexplicable, but as we see them in art — as something inevitably arising from the conditions, our intellectual satisfaction at seeing the working out of circumstances is great enough so that we do not focus our emotional attention upon the physical ac-

companiments of the disaster. It is an illuminating commentary on this second explanation that in classical Greek tragedy the actual physical death always took place off stage. The decadent writer to be sure may try to get his artistic effect by shocking our nerves. I remember — dimly — a story by Ambrose Bierce which ends by a man falling out of a window and having his brains dashed out just as his wife or ex-wife is passing the spot. That sort of thing may produce a shudder but the shudder works against rather than for our ultimate æsthetic satisfaction.

"That's that" is or ought to be the unspoken comment when one has experienced any work of art. If the work leaves a feeling expressible in any such formula as "Something ought to be done about that!" — as much of the work of Dickens, Charles Reade and the propagandist novelists generally did — the work is not primarily or at least not exclusively a work of art, but a sermon, a work of inspiration.

The last few paragraphs may appear to have had very little application to that diamond that seems to twinkle into this dissertation only to twinkle out again: but the diamond has rhythm — if it is cut properly — and has logic. One facet implies another and determines its proportions. We enjoy looking at it and we do

not feel that there is anything to be done, as a result. It is worth while in itself. However, I ought to interject here that in a way the diamond is a bad example. For most people cannot look at a diamond æsthetically but must describe it in financial terms: "Oh, look at Mrs. So and So's diamond; it must have cost . . ." — or in sentimental terms: "Why, look at Minnie's finger, she must be engaged." Some very prosaic sociologists have tried to explain away the beauty not only of jewels but of beautifully printed books in terms of social snobbery — those objects being, in this view, but items of ostentatiously useless expenditure, made as a badge of wealth and leisure. One need not deny that books and jewels may be and often are so used, but that does not affect their æsthetic merits when viewed æsthetically.

The naïve view of the beauty of a diamond or of any other natural object is simply that we enjoy mathematical proportions and that the beauty is intrinsic in the object. But this view is now held by only a few æstheticians. For after all, the experience of beauty is a subjective experience: it is our judgment that confers the quality of beauty. A landscape which is beautiful to one observer is not beautiful to another — it simply does not speak to him.

Unfortunately for our present purpose it is quite the habit nowadays to use the word beautiful for anything that is pleasant — things running all the way from a string of beads to a pie — and Bernard Bosanquet, in his "Three Lectures on Æsthetic" suggests that for artistic beauty we use the phrase "æsthetic excellence," for in art the word beauty may often be legitimately applied to something that apart from its context would be ugly.

What, then, causes us in the presence of any object to make the judgment that it is beautiful or æsthetically excellent? It is not that we judge it to be not useful, that we do not intend to do anything with it — that is merely a negative condition of the æsthetic experience. The answer most generally given by recent æstheticians is that an object we call beautiful is an expressive object. What is meant by that? Well, we might say an object that has a character of its own. It is worth looking at for its own sake.

But we can go a step further than that: it is something that seems to say something to us, that seems to embody a feeling. The doctrine of art as expression was given its greatest vogue by Benedetto Croce, and he put it this way: If you are content to look at a rose just as an individual rose, that is to say you have an "intuition" of a

rose and do not proceed to think of the concept "rose" — which would start you thinking of the qualities that all roses have in common and so lead you into logic and science — you are then experiencing the rose æsthetically.

But this account of the matter is inadequate, and for two reasons: it is doubtful if we ever indulge in a mental operation that can be called intuition in that sense; and it is doubtful if the word expression as used by Croce has a definite meaning.

But for the moment let us take the risk of using "expression" even though it is a term which we shall have to qualify sooner or later. And let us use it to draw together the two very different kinds of experience which we began by calling artistic: the sight of a diamond and the reading of a book. Most natural forms, perhaps all natural forms if each is seen in its proper non-utilitarian context, are what Bernard Bosanquet calls "*a priori* expressive": that is we immediately have a certain sort of feeling when we see them. He gives the very simple example of a square. When we see it we hardly ever stop to remind ourselves that here is a form all of whose sides are equal in length and every two of whose sides meet at a right angle. We should only have that reaction if we were studying elementary geome-

try. No, our æsthetic reaction to a square is to squareness as a quality. The square says to us something like "All square." And if we are describing a man of a certain type we instinctively turn to our square as a symbol, and we say, "He's all square." In music, sounds are used for their *a priori* expressiveness — and indeed we might say that music is the most æsthetic of the arts just because it gives us *a priori* æsthetic expressions.

But in reading a book — a novel or a play, that is — we are dealing with the same sort of thing. A work of science or a novel by Theodore Dreiser may give us a scientific or a pseudo-scientific account of man or of individual men. When a young lady in a Dreiser novel begins to feel a certain perturbation when young men pass her, Mr. Dreiser, not content with "expression," makes a remark about "a stirring — a nerve plasm palpitation" — which is something that as a matter of fact Mr. Dreiser, or anybody, knows next to nothing about. Nor in the context is it of the slightest interest. What we are interested in is the girl's conscious reactions and the overt results, in visible conduct, of her unconscious reactions — not in their assumed mechanism.

When, however, the picture of a character in a novel is done in terms of those images which

are expressive to all of us, then we have an æsthetic effect, then we get the æsthetically excellent or the beautiful. For instance in one of Mr. Wells' novels, "Ann Veronica," we have a story of a girl who falls in love with her science teacher. (Although Mr. Wells is by intention a propagandist and dealer in ideas he is also an artist.) It is years since I have read the book and I do not have it by me to quote from, but I can still remember vividly the scene in the laboratory when Ann discovers that she has fallen in love with this teacher. It is at a moment when he has leaned over some apparatus and a bar of sunlight plays on his face, showing up his fair skin: that beam of light precipitates the "crystallization" of Ann's feelings and they suddenly break into her consciousness as a certainty that she is in love. That is a story told not in diagrams but in terms of our conscious living, our reaction to this or that æsthetic surface and in terms of this or that image. Thus the most idea-laden novel may be really a work of art if it uses æsthetic material instead of merely plying us with concepts.

But the use of the word expression in Croce's sense seems to lead into all sorts of difficulties. Croce has been accused of oversimplifying the theory of art by making art as an activity

synonymous with intuition as a simple mental operation and intuition exactly synonymous again with expression in the sense of an imaging of the intuition — all those operations, like the persons of the Athanasian creed, being one. And none of them being the same thing as painting or writing or making musical sounds — so that when we say that the lines and composition in a landscape express peace we are then using the word in a different sense — for to Croce the actual physical embodiment, the picture, is not a work of art but merely a mnemonic device for recalling the intuition which is the work of art.

As against that idea I believe Bosanquet is right when he calls our attention to the fact that the materials of the work of art are more than a memory device: they condition the artist's expression. For the artist's imagination works in terms of this or that medium. The Shakespeare who, as Croce would say, "intuited" Hamlet did so in terms already given him by the fact that the English language was a part of his mind. Or, to take another example given by Bosanquet:

"If you know or can feel how the beauty of bronze — that is, its expressive capacity — differs from the beauty of marble, you are on the way to understand the diverging beauty of the arts; and if you insist on neglecting these affini-

ties of the spirit, your theory remains abstract, and has no illuminating power."

Realistic critics of Croce's æsthetic have been so intent, however, on quarreling with his perhaps unfortunate terminology that they have been blind to the real insight behind it. What we may call the intention behind the terminology has been disengaged by one only among his commentators. Warner Fite, in his "Moral Philosophy," points out that the significance of Croce's philosophy of art is that he rescues art from the professional artist and makes the æsthetic "a generic aspect of the human mind." Creative art, in other words, is not something that is produced by men of genius nor is it produced from "exceptional and abnormal states of mind." "Since we all talk," — Mr. Fite quotes Croce — "we are all artists." And the acknowledged or professional artist is not a man who has an ability to express things, which is denied the rest of us, but he is a man who sees more. But the seeing of all of us is creative: the physician's world, the machinist's world, the mathematician's world, are all æsthetic constructions each corresponding to a certain type of imagination:

"Every thinking man's impression of the world is an artistic intuition. As a thinking man he is not a mere recipient of impressions, but the

artist and architect of a universe; or, once more, a creator of life."

And it is because Croce, although making the æsthetic a "moment" in the life of the spirit, yet separates that aspect of it from logical knowledge and from economic and moral behavior that his theory of æsthetic lands in difficulties. For he has "departmentalized" the soul, in this fourfold way just as Kant did in the older "knowledge, feeling, and will." But in so far as we are conscious beings we are not departmentalized. Whenever we experience anything, our experience is unified. And so we need not take too seriously any of the terms into which rival æstheticians analyze the æsthetic and artistic experiences.

Even the distinction that knowledge deals with the real world while art is not "real" need not trouble us, or the contention of the "intellectualists" that art has a cognitive element. Some years ago I read a work on the relationship of art and public worship in which the author, a learned man, argued that Croce might be right in saying of some art that it was the expression of the artist's intuitions, but that surely in such complex art as Shakespeare's "Hamlet" we had concepts and ideas as well. Of course, we have, but they are not bare, abstract ideas. They are em-

bodied: so that they may be held in the imagination. A mere idea is an abstraction — not a total human experience. The question which the artist answers is what it means in terms of experience to have this or that idea.

A recent writer on æsthetics, W. T. Stace, in "The Meaning of Beauty" tries to avoid the use of the word "expression" by saying that anything which we call beautiful is a union or fusing of something perceived, a flower for example, with a concept, it might be grace or fragility. But there again we have a purely abstract separation of what, in our experience, is never divided. As a friend of mine recently pointed out in discussing this theory even such a "conceptual" thing as the idea of evolution may be imaginatively turned into a perception — not only imaginatively, but actually, for a series of moving pictures could be made in which the million year evolution of a species could be shown in half an hour.

Now instead of saying that such a picture "expressed" evolution we may say that it symbolized it. And art will differ from scientific or general "thinking" because in those activities symbols are used arbitrarily and to denote mere relationships. In art the symbolism is intrinsic and is always of the total experience, that is to say,

the experiencer's reaction as well as the occasion of that reaction. For instance, a chemical equation is not artistic at all; an allegory is imperfectly so — because it needs an explanation. Rodin's "The Thinker" is not successful art because unless we were told, by the title, that the figure symbolizes thought we should not discover that interpretation: the title steers the beholder into one out of many possible paths of symbolic meaning.

But in a successful work of art the symbol is an inherent part of the experience symbolized. In "How to Criticize Books" I quoted a poem by Edmund Blunden, entitled "An Annotation" — the annotation being on Shakespeare's careless use of the primrose as a symbol: "the primrose path to the everlasting bonfire." A primrose simply does not symbolize that sort of thing, Mr. Blunden says, but is rather the "emblem of early seeking, early finding." But the symbolism of art does not mean that in art a creator shares his experience with others. The experience of each one of us is, in any direct manner, incommunicable. To the artist his experience of life may be objectified and symbolized in certain objects depicted in the appropriate media. The medium the artist uses, of course, depends on the quality or bent of his imagination. His experi-

ence is projected in certain symbols. We, the recipients of his art, translate those symbols back into terms of our experience — and our experience is never the same as that of the artist. In "A Midsummer Night's Dream" Titania says the following words, and in a context which consists only of remarks about the weather:

The nine-men's morris is filled up with mud,
And the quaint mazes of the wanton green
For lack of tread are undistinguishable.

Why are those lines so portentous, so haunting? For, if we are sensitive to such things, we have a reaction to them which is much more than their structural relation to the play seems to call for. It is, indeed, one of those instances, and there are many of them in Shakespeare, where the poet ran away from the dramatist. For what do we feel when we read them? A sense of loneliness, of desolation made more desolate by the knowledge that it reigns in a spot created for gayety and human fellowship. The desolation is on a small scale, to be sure, and it is reparable with time and effort, but at the moment it is a symbol of human beings in retreat, formlessness obliterating the work of their fancy.

It is that — and yet as far as Shakespeare was consciously aware it may have been only a reminiscence that the winter before he wrote the play had been an exceptionally wet one — indeed I believe that such a possibility is one of the factors used by scholars in dating the play. I shall give one more example of symbolism from an art in which, some theorists tell us, there is form but no meaning, that of music. In his "Principles of Literary Criticism" Mr. I. A. Richards admits that for "scientific" psychology music presents an "impasse." But being a scientific gentleman and a "naturalist" he fears that we, impatient at his being "stuck" will try to solve the mystery for ourselves and try to solve it sentimentally — along the lines of Browning's three sounds that together make

Not a fourth sound but a star.

The fact that music and its effect cannot be analyzed, Mr. Richards tells us, is not because there is anything inexplicable or unique about music, but simply because our science of neurology has not yet achieved the means of such analysis. The question is not one of mystery but simply of complication, and when the question is solved it will be in terms of neurology.

However, the great musicians have at least thought that they were telling us things; but not, of course, the sort of things that could be translated into some other language — that of words, for instance. They certainly did not feel that in their profounder works they were merely playing complicated arabesques on our nervous systems. And often the meaning of music — and by that I do not at all mean in the sense of "program music" — almost seems to tremble on the border of articulate speech. Certainly we all recognize that there is a correspondence between the character of the music and the personality and fortunes of the man, and also between the music and its intellectual climate. Would Mozart, for instance, have composed what he did if he had lived in a twentieth-century democracy?

Of course the attempt to translate the language of music into any other — that of words, for example — is impossible. When we reflect that it is practically impossible to give more than a general idea of a poem in one langauge when we translate it into another, we can readily see how much more impossible it is to express the "findings" of music in a totally different medium. But here is my one example of how far a sensitive hearer of music may go in that direc-

tion. Warner Fite in his "Moral Philosophy" holds that all human experience is an insight into reality. This includes experience of music:

"Sometime ago I heard unexpectedly — having accepted an invitation on the spur of the moment with no prevision of program — an orchestral rendering of Bach's 'Passacaglia,' a new and glorious addition to my realm of experience. My mind had been full of a perplexing pedagogical and philosophical problem which called for practical solution in a day or two to come, namely, how to explain to a few hundred immature students the meaning of Plato's theory of transcendent and supersensible ideas — how, I mean, to make this conception of transcendence intelligible from the point of view of human experience. As I listened to Bach it suddenly became clear to me that if I could convey that experience they would see what Plato meant, and that without some such experience the theory of ideas could never be for them more than a form of words."

I should end with a caution. Art as symbolism and the above example do not mean that art in any form gives us ideas which are true to fact — so that a musician, through his music, could prove that Plato's ideas did really, for instance, dominate the flux of experienced change

and the evolution inferred therefrom. Nor is it meant that if all the novelists wrote optimistically they would be evidence against a Schopenhaurean pessimist. What it does mean is that pessimism as a concept is a mere empty thing until we have, either through our own unhappy experience or through the art of a disillusioned writer, felt it æsthetically.

In the light of the foregoing considerations I think we may claim that we have a theory which covers all types of the æsthetic experience. But the important thing is not the theory but the facts. Æsthetic experience is what we are after and that theory is best which draws our attention to those aspects of æsthetic experience which, in our preoccupation with practical activities, we should otherwise miss. Some students of æsthetics make use of other terms. For instance, there is one aspect of the æsthetic experience — its purely contemplative nature — which has been expressed in a number of different ways. One term for it which we have not heretofore used is "psychic distance." When we read Shakespeare's

Full fathom five thy father lies,
Of his bones are coral made. . . .

we take it just for what it is. We are not troubled by thoughts of drowning; we do not begin to wonder if such things could not be prevented if ships were provided with more life-belts; we do not even stop to congratulate ourselves that modern ships are larger than Elizabethan ships and get wrecked less frequently. But if we happened to read those lines just after a narrow escape from drowning or just after we had lost a friend by drowning, we should not be able to enjoy them æsthetically. We should have lost psychic distance.

Mr. Richards, however, for the same situation, has a different terminology. To him the æsthetic experience is primarily one of the equilibrium of impulses — of a balance. In that lyric the mental event or impulse which is the idea of drowning being aroused in the mind is balanced against the decorative aspects of the poem. In the event of its having a personal meaning to us of the kind just supposed, that meaning would overbalance the other elements and we should not achieve æsthetic equilibrium but would be disturbed by tragic thoughts of drowning. On the other hand Croce would say that our personal experience in regard to drowning caused us to think of the poem in practical terms instead of

in terms of the intuition of that particular remote and unreal drowning.

But, however it is said, the point is that in order to enjoy a work of art we must have this disinterested attitude; the moment our will, our practical interests, our moral prejudices enter, we lose psychic distance. Then the effect of the work may be to stimulate us to moral endeavor — as when we read a story that muckrakes our social system, or to make us indignant — as when a person of reforming temper reads a story in which illicit love is represented and not reprehended.

It is perhaps the one great obstacle to the appreciation of all the arts in America, except music, that our public cannot achieve psychic distance. Music is proverbially the art which America patronizes most lavishly if not most intelligently. That is because in music psychic distance is in a measure already achieved for us. At least there is no temptation to take up other than the æsthetic attitude toward it.

But the moment we have a form of art which deals with representation — the nón-modernist picture, the poem, the novel — our public is "laying for it." Its members either identify themselves with the good characters or the lucky ones, and so view the work not æsthetically but in

terms of wish-fulfillment, or else they wax indignant at the evil or even at the weak and unsuccessful characters. I once heard a fairly intelligent looking woman say that she did not want to read novels dealing with characters whom she would not care to entertain in her home.

And a young gentleman who wished to review books, when asked, after he had curled his lip at one or two proffered novels, what sort of novels he liked, remarked: "I don't want to read any books whose characters are not my intellectual equals."

Æsthetically, both of these people were illiterate.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Novel

THERE are those who regard novels as they regard dandelions: so numerous in their recurring seasons (novels used to come in the spring and in the fall, though now they come all the year 'round) as not to be worth serious consideration *per se*. If dandelions are gathered it is to make wine, and if novels are bought it is again as a sort of anodyne, as things to kill time with.

But it would be more logical to regard the novel not as a species but as a whole kingdom, and then classify as dandelions only detective stories, mysteries, wish-fulfillment tales, Pollyanna stuff, and such things. That leaves us the "serious" novel. And again we may sub-divide. There is the novel that is serious because it is written with a practical purpose; that is, either as social satire or as direct propaganda. Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle" was worth writing and worth reading on practical grounds — even though the experience of reading could not be

called æsthetic experience. It did a lot of good, though not as much good or the kind of good that Upton Sinclair had hoped. Indeed I believe he remarked, after the smoke of the battle had cleared, that where he had hoped to stir the consciences of the American people he had only stirred their stomachs. I believe, too, that every serious-minded person should read Mr. Sinclair's "Boston" — particularly if he does not know the actual situation in the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

Possibly the most popular novels ever written have been either propagandist or critical — in the sense of legitimate fault-finding. "Uncle Tom's Cabin," many of Dickens' novels, the story of a lunatic asylum by Charles Reade which exposed the horrors of private asylums, all have had immense circulation and calculable social effects; though a work which has some incidental practical effect need not therefore be propagandist in purpose or in essence. Thus Mr. Galsworthy does not regard his play, "Justice" (if I may take for the moment a dramatic example), as a propagandist work, even though it did result in some inquiry into the English system of the administration of justice. Mr. Galsworthy thinks that the essential tragedy lies deeper, and that it will remain valid even in that day when prisons shall perhaps be no more and

when trials are conducted by psychiatrists instead of by lawyers.

But the ordinary reader does not go that far; if the novel seems to point at this or that definite abuse, he does not say to himself: "This is a type of a universal situation." He takes the surface meaning. And the great popularity of the critical novel has been the means of educating many people to think of all novels as a criticism not of cosmic life, but of social life. Their final question, as they have closed novel after novel, has been "What can we do about this?"

And so I must next remind the reader that besides propagandist or critical novels there is a second type of serious novel, written for the sake of expressing something rather than to criticize anything.

It is doubtful if the novel as such ought to be regarded as a work of art in the same sense in which we regard a symphony or a picture as a work of art. Often it is a work of philosophy or a blend of philosophy with art. We must remember that the great majority, especially of our earlier novelists, had not formulated any æsthetic theory and felt quite free to put into one book a story and a running critical commentary on the characters. It is in fact perhaps not until the advent of Henry James that we find a novelist

— at least openly — separating himself from the humor, the exuberance, the auctorial commentary, the philosophy, of the earlier novel and concentrating on those formal qualities, those elements of texture and design, which we associate with the stricter æsthetic manifestations.

Perhaps the figure should not be pushed too far, but as a result of this new self-consciousness on the part of the novelist, we have two tendencies to-day: the centrifugal novel and the centripetal; the older type that flies out from a center and the newer type that is clustered around a center; the novel that stresses diversity and the novel that stresses unity. The medium of the one is narration, of the other plot. The difference between narrative and plot is the difference between succession and interconnection. As E. M. Forster puts it in his "Aspects of the Novel": " 'The king died, and then the queen died,' is a story. 'The king died, and then the queen died of grief' is a plot. The time sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it."

Now in many novels the plot is artificial, external, and therefore frivolous. Any human adventure which depends upon the discovery of the secret drawer in which the will is hidden is an adventure in chance, contingency, and is

therefore not of intrinsic interest; it is not revelatory of any new aspect, or newly revelatory of any old aspect of life. We might say that all detective stories (though there are a few in which character predominates and "passion spins the plot") and all trick ending stories are of this type. One reads them for the excitement of the chase, and when once the secret is discovered one never reads them again. Which means that our attitude toward them from the beginning and all through is not an æsthetic or contemplative attitude.

But in the serious sense plot is a form of unity. It holds a story together through implication and causality. It makes a real pattern, a significant pattern. Our daily life is so cluttered up with the inchoate, the contingent, that we cannot always see its pattern. In the case of many people there is no pattern — they are blown on the winds of circumstance like autumn leaves. But in so far as we are self-conscious we demand significance. We ask of everything we see what it means, what it implies as to other things and as to the world. And the novel, regarded intellectually, gives us that significance.

This emphatically does not mean, however, that we want what William James disparagingly called a "block-universe" in which everything is

fated and foredoomed, and that the novel obligingly shows us that free will and chance are appearances only and that given two multiplied by two in the first chapter we always have four in the last chapter. All it does mean is that we like to see that things are connected and modify one another, that persons and actions count — that real consequences arise in life. Now a work of philosophy could show that in a way — but not in the way of the novel. A work of philosophy would show it in more or less abstraction — generally more. A novel shows it concretely and in terms of the whole person. In other words the novel shows us what is meant when the philosopher says that life is so-and-so: fated or free, a good or an evil.

Let me give one or two examples of novels that do this by means of plot. In Willa Cather's "A Lost Lady" we have the story of a woman who is the social queen of a small but important mid-west railroad town. The heads of the road come there, and she entertains them. Then there is a change of some sort on the road. The town that was once an important center is one no longer. The members of the lady's court no longer attend it. And the lady who was a queen by the grace of circumstances is seen not to be a queen in her own heart — for she cannot exer-

cise the one function which ultimately testifies that one is a king or a queen in one's heart: she cannot abdicate. In place of the real courtiers who have vanished she goes after commoners and raises them to a rank that they cannot live up to. The village lad whose loutish character we have seen in his younger days is now admitted to her favors. The queen who could not abdicate has now become a pseudo-queen. We might sum up the whole novel in a phrase from Edwin Arlington Robinson's "Merlin":

A pathos of a lost authority
Long faded and unconscionably gone.

That is the plot.

It is a sad commentary on the spirit in which many people read novels that a high-school teacher in an Illinois town — and a college town at that — was reported to the superintendent of schools because she had given "A Lost Lady" to her senior high-school students to read as part of a course in contemporary literature. The objection to the book was not that it contained any "immoral scenes" — it doesn't — but that after the lady had been exhibited as engaging in an "affair" she was allowed by her creator to leave the town after her husband's death, to marry

again, to be so well off that she could send money for the care of her husband's grave, and to die in bed at a ripe age. The mother who made this complaint thought that the heroine ought to have been "punished" in some way, to have come to some appropriately violent end such as being run over by a train!

Another novel that exhibits plot in the best sense is Louis Couperus' "The Inevitable." Couperus, recently dead, is a great novelist who combines the subtlety of Henry James with a gusto for life and a — well, let us say a healthy coarseness at times, that James lacks. In "The Inevitable" we have the story of a woman married to a Dutchman who mistreats her. She decides to leave him and goes to Italy. The transition from domestic infelicity in dark-skied Holland to freedom in sunny Italy fills her with happiness. Soon she meets a young artist, a sensitive, not dominating but ingratiating man, who opens her eyes to the beauty of pictures, who brings a whole range of new interests into her life. The two fall in love and she goes to live with him. Soon he asks her why she does not get a divorce so that they may marry. But she feels that she cannot do it. For while her personal and conscious mind is committed to freedom and to this young man, there is deep within her soul

an organic bond with her husband. At first only her sub-conscious feels, but later she herself knows that when he calls she will return: that their marriage is a racial thing; that she is potentially the mother of his children. And after a time this Hollander, who has never recognized his wife's right to leave him, does call her. And like a bird fascinated by a snake she obeys the call. We hate to see it happen — at least I did. A feminist, I am sure, would hate to see it happen so much that she would fall to cursing Couperus for a reactionary. But art is not wish-fulfillment — and we have to see it happen. For, given the terms with which Couperus starts out, the whole story is just what he says it is, in his title: inevitable.

Novels such as these have just as much form, composition, logic, as musical symphonies. They hang together — ideally not a word in them is superfluous.

And what a contrast between such works and books like "The Pickwick Papers" which might be going on as a serial to the present day if Dickens had been granted so much length of life!

But even such novels as "The Pickwick Papers" (if we can call them novels) and the older "picaresque" novel, in which we follow the adventures of a fascinating and not too

scrupulous hero through love and war or love and chicanery, have the unity of a point of view or of a single hero.

Both types and also the later "stream of consciousness" type, in which the point of view is the whole of a person, his inner promptings and inhibitions as well as his overt acts, must deal with their subject in æsthetic terms and not in the narrowly expository terms of science and philosophy.

By æsthetic terms we simply mean the terms in which we live life rather than those in which we think about it: sensuous terms, images. In so far as the novel has at times to depart from these terms and use exposition it becomes more than or other than a work of art. If you turn to Fielding's "Tom Jones" you will find chapter after chapter prefixed by the author's comment: that is exposition. The whole tendency of the novel has been to get away from that method and into the purely æsthetic sphere. The author as author tends to disappear. In other words, the novel approaches the dramatic and the pictorial.

In the stream of consciousness novel we have the pictorial used in a new way. We are shown, as it were, both sides of the tapestry: we see not only the picture but we see how it got there and what it is used for. One of the greatest novels of

the century, perhaps one of the great landmarks in the history of the novel, is Marcel Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* which has been translated by C. K. Scott-Moncrieff under the title "Remembrance of Things Past." This novel in heaven knows how many volumes — we are as yet only up to Part Six: "The Captive" in the English translation — is many things. It is in part an autobiography, in part a survey of French manners, in part a study of homosexuality, and, most interesting for our present purpose, it is in part a novel about the writing of a novel. Proust tells us a story — any number of stories in fact, and he also tells us the story of how he got the story. He got it from memory, for the most part, and the first words of the first volume tell how he awakens in the morning and, so to say, gropes for himself — for his identity which is dependent on his memories. But these memories do not come bare or even of themselves. They are evoked by images because they are memories of the qualities of things, of things as they enter into our emotional life — not of things merely in their relations to other things. We think in terms of relations but we feel and therefore live in terms of images. Here is one of the many examples from Proust. Swann, as a child, hated to be sent to bed without his

mother's kiss. But on the occasion of late or formal dinners this was likely to happen:

"And so I must set forth without viaticum; must climb each step of the staircase 'against my heart,' as the saying is, climbing in opposition to my heart's desire, which was to return to my mother, since she had not, by her kiss, given my heart leave to accompany me forth. That hateful staircase, up which I always passed with such dismay, gave out a smell of varnish which had to some extent absorbed, made definite and fixed the special quality of sorrow that I felt each evening, and made it perhaps even more cruel to my sensibility because, when it assumed this olfactory guise, my intellect was powerless to resist it. When we have gone to sleep with a maddening toothache and are conscious of it only as a little girl whom we attempt, time after time, to pull out of the water, or as a line of Molière which we repeat incessantly to ourselves, it is a great relief to wake up, so that our intelligence can disentangle the idea of toothache from any artificial semblance of heroism or rhythmic cadence. It was the precise converse of this relief which I felt when my anguish at having to go up to my room invaded my consciousness in a manner infinitely more rapid, instantaneous almost, a manner at once insidious and brutal as

I breathed in — a more poisonous thing than any moral penetration — the peculiar smell of the varnish upon that staircase."

That association, of course, was accidental, but images in art reveal not only states associated with them accidentally but states which they express directly — a matter which will be taken up in a succeeding chapter. The point is that the emotions and feelings, even the volitions, with which the novelist deals must always be incarnated in something that does express them. Given bare they are mere abstractions. And it is because certain popular novelists, especially of the morally uplifting kind, take a bare abstraction first and then pad it over with what is supposed to be flesh and blood, that their creations are unreal. A Harold Bell Wright heroine, for example, is not a woman but a feminine personification of some one virtue — usually carried to excess. On account of the excess we do not believe in her with our intellects, and on account of the deadness, of the fact that she is a prop for an abstraction and not a human being, we do not feel with or for her — she does not come to life in our imaginations. For the novelist who thinks in æsthetic terms, however, the quality always comes first — and he may not even bother to connect the quality with any

such abstract name as probity, optimism, or whatever the virtue or alleged virtue may be.

The novelist, therefore, who gives us mere concepts instead of percepts is falling short of his opportunity. This is the weakness of one contemporary American novelist who in other ways is admirable. This novelist, Theodore Dreiser, has, we may suppose, a limited range of percepts. He has, we know, a very definitely stated materialistic philosophy — and perhaps his philosophy forbids him to entertain certain percepts. For it is only too easy, if you think that man is a machine, to perceive only that in him which appears to be mechanical. And this is Mr. Dreiser's vice as a novelist. In the beginning of the trilogy dealing with the rise of Cowperwood — modeled on the Yerkes who built the Chicago elevated roads — he tells us about the struggle for food as seen in a tank of fish. And throughout his book the two primal hungers — for food and for sexual love — that are supposed to animate all creation exclusively in this view of the matter, are the only hungers which he permits us to perceive. To be sure, he tells us how Cowperwood collected pictures; but he does not tell us how he enjoyed them.

In "An American Tragedy" Dreiser pushes this conceptualized view of human beings

to its logical absurdity. Having described Clyde's father and mother, and apparently stopping to take breath and to congratulate himself on doing a remarkable job, he decides to share his self-congratulation with the reader:

"That such a family, thus cursorily presented, might have a different and somewhat peculiar history could well be anticipated, and it would be true. Indeed this one presented one of those anomalies of psychic and social reflex and motivation such as would tax the skill of not only the psychologist, but the chemist and physicist as well, to unravel."

In so far as the above means anything it means this: I have succeeded in presenting such a peculiar family that if you want to understand them you will have to call in the psychologist, the chemist and the physicist. In ordinary human terms you will never be able to get at their secret.

But in the first place, the family of Clyde are not such a wonderful specimen of an anomalous family: they are more commonplace than the Jukes crowd whose history has been so well documented. Indeed they are quite commonplace. And in so far as they are not commonplace but individualized so far are they explicable, if at all, in the novelist's terms and the sociologist's

terms, but certainly not in the chemist's terms or the physicist's. Suppose for a moment that Mr. Dreiser took them into a psychological laboratory for study: only a few of the human reactions are possible of isolation and study in the laboratory. Suppose he took them to the chemist and physicist. As long as those men kept in character what could they do to the Griffiths? The physicist could weigh them all, take their temperatures, measure the electrical tensions in their muscles, and so forth. The chemist could analyze their excretions, try out the effect of putting more oxygen in their air or taking some out. But the results of the chemist and the physicist would be the same results as if any other lot of human beings were taken. Of the Griffiths as individuals he could tell us nothing. That is the job of the novelist. And when a novelist tries to tell us the individual things we want to know in terms of a general science, he simply falls down on the job.

As long as a novelist is subjectively analytical, as Proust, or behavioristic, describing the conduct of his people so that we may infer their characters from the outer manifestations of those characters, there is no reason why he should call in the aid of general assumptions, such as Mr. Dreiser's, that people are merely machines.

For even if they are, that is no explanation of the characters of the Griffiths especially; it would be, if true, just as much an explanation of the life of St. Francis of Assisi or of Julius Cæsar. In other words such a general formula has no heuristic value in any given case — you cannot find anything more with it than you could without it.

It is not my aim in the present book to tell any one what to read, but only how to read; nevertheless there is a sense in which one cannot read any book unless one has previously read certain others. Indeed it is true that we could not even lead the lives we do if certain people of past generations had not written books. La Rochefoucauld remarked that many people would never have known love if they had not heard of it. And we may take that in a wider sense than his and say that even the people who fall in love most naturally — to say nothing of the people who practice the Golden Rule most naturally — are following literary models.

The old antithesis between books and life is a silly and misleading one. In so far as we know people merely through seeing them and talking to them about mutual services and the price of this or that, we do not know them: at most there is animal communication about animal needs.

In so far as we analyze people psychologically we are only dealing in abstractions. From those points of view a woman, for instance, is but the female of the species. What we humanly know about any woman or about women in general is largely the product of the arts — which do not give us merely fictionalized or ideal women, but which give concrete embodiment to those overtones and nuances which make up the woman of human discourse. Ruth in the alien corn, Shakespeare's women, Meredith's and Thomas Hardy's women, have all become not so much patterns as suggestions by which we interpret the actual women we meet.

And so with men and with children — if the writers had not been prone to idealize children I am sure the ordinary parent would not have the fund of idealized and idealizing affection which he has. The maternal affection biologically necessary to give the child a start would have been all, and it would soon have been followed by exasperation — for no person or thing in the visible universe can be as exasperating as a child. But our children too we see not as small human animals but as crystallizations of all the dream children we have read about, and of course we must admit that given half a chance the children will fulfill the rôle we assign them,

for they too come under the spell of literature.

To know people then, unless the reader is a genius who is able to see people disinterestedly — and then he is a potential novelist — we must know books. An example of not knowing people because he was unable to appreciate certain books recently came under my notice. A university professor in an interview said that too many Russian novels were being translated and read in America. We in America, he said, are a common-sense people and we have no real interest in the morbid Russian character. Had this man read Dostoevsky, to begin with, his eyes would have been opened to countless Dostoevsky characters living in America. And between another Russian writer, Chekhov, and our own Sherwood Anderson there is a marked parallel. Both, with sympathy and without any trace of patronage, write short stories about the weak, the misfits, the neurotic, and those seeking spiritual consolations which they cannot find.

Are there any recent developments which the reader of contemporary fiction may expect to discover? Of course under the influence of James Joyce's "Ulysses," Dorothy Richardson's "Pilgrimage" — a long novel now in its tenth volume — and Proust, a number of the younger novelists are writing "stream of consciousness

novels"; on the other hand the short, well-articulated novel is very popular. The trouble with the "Ulysses" sort of thing is that it cannot really follow a stream of consciousness — it gives the appearance of being total but is in point of fact selective. Unlike Dorothy Richardson's work, Mr. Joyce's has an arbitrary pattern — the Ulysses motif — imposed on the account of the streams of consciousness which we are given. That, apart from that pattern, Mr. Joyce has carried the substance of the novel to the very limit, is suggested by his later work, for which he has had to invent what is practically a new language.

It has indeed been suggested that the emphasis on analysis in such works naturally appeared at a time of doubt and questioning and agnosticism, and that if the present tendencies of science to dispense with a naturalistic or mechanistic philosophy, and the tendency of psychology to substitute talk of "wholes" and configurations for the analytic terms of reflexes and sensations, continue, the novelist will follow suit and once more try to interpret life in patterns rather than in "dissociations."

I rather doubt, however, whether the novelist is going to get any clews for fictional patterns from the newer philosophies and psychologies.

The only patterns he can legitimately use are patterns which he can see in human life — not scientific ones into which he must force human life.

And unless the novelist has reason to see men acting and being acted toward as ends in themselves, it is small consolation perhaps to tell them that they are significant as part of a cosmic pattern. That the novelist of to-morrow shall be influenced by the philosophy of to-morrow is indeed to be hoped. His function is not to accept it, but to try it out by contrasting with its pretensions the actual fortunes of men as they are to be observed in others and felt in the artist's own vicissitudes.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Great Literary Personalities

Most people pay lip-service to the classics and never read them. Occasionally an iconoclast comes along and dares to say that the classics deserve to be neglected. In a recent volume of essays Ernest Boyd sailed into Milton with all the ferocity that he might have devoted to a contemporary poetaster.

However, we might reflect that academic tradition alone would hardly keep the classics alive if they were really as dull as many people suppose. And if we use the word not as meaning all "classical writers" or all the writers of Greece and Rome, but simply as meaning the literature that was written in times past and that still appeals to us, we shall have to admit that it must be good literature or its appeal would have died long ago. Suppose, instead of trying to give a formal definition of a classic we simply say that it is a book which was written long ago but which is still or again contemporary. I say still

or again because some classics have been lost for a while, others have been out of vogue for a time — the eighteenth century underrated Shakespeare — but they have always "come back."

And they have come back because they deal with what some people call the permanent aspects of human nature, perhaps more safely and simply called things of perennial interest. For "human nature" is a weasel phrase: most of what we call human nature is social nature imposed on an animal economy. On the other hand when people say "You cannot change human nature" you may know that they are talking nonsense — and they generally say it as part of an offensive against pacifists and socialists.

To read the classics then in the spirit of those anti-modernists who salute every new idea from socialism to psychoanalysis by saying (when they first meet it) that it is fallacious, and (on second meeting) that it is all in Plato anyhow, is foolish. And to read Greek tragedy and to assume that the motivation is the same as that of a play by Eugene O'Neill is equally foolish. That human motivation has not changed much is evident from the fact that we still react æsthetically to Greek drama in general. So far as tragedy is concerned we still react to its general concep-

tion: of Fate overruling the destinies of men. But we are so far from regarding Fate as the Greeks did that tragedy is no longer our major form of art.

But it is only in so far as we know not only the history of the past — through its documents — but some of the feelings of the past — through its imaginative literature, that we can understand our own situations and attain any perspective. Suppose two people to read the following sentence from John Dewey's "Human Nature and Conduct" in which he is adversely criticizing the doctrines of Freud. One of them knows literature from Greece through the Renaissance to the present. The other is ignorant of any literature earlier than the nineteenth century. One will swallow Mr. Dewey's sentence whole. The other will be puzzled by it and perhaps deny its statement:

"The treatment of sex by psychoanalysts is most instructive, for it flagrantly exhibits both the consequences of artificial simplification and the transformation of social results into psychic causes. Writers, usually male, hold forth on the psychology of woman, as if they were dealing with a Platonic universal entity, although they habitually treat men as individuals, varying with structure and environment. They treat phe-

nomena which are peculiarly symptoms of the West at the present time as if they were the necessary effects of fixed native impulses of human nature. Romantic love as it exists to-day, with all the varying perturbations it occasions, is as definitely a sign of specific historic conditions as are big battleships with turbines, internal combustion engines, and electrically driven machines. It would be as sensible to treat the latter as effects of a single psychic cause as to attribute the phenomena of disturbance and conflict which accompany present sexual relations as manifestations of an original psychic force or Libido. Upon this point at least a Marxian simplification is nearer the truth than that of Jung."

I submit that any one who is innocent of classical lore would not only swallow that sentence whole but might misunderstand it and think it meant that romantic love is as recent a thing as turbine-engines. And our tendency to-day is far too much toward that sort of mistake. Because turbine-engines and motor-cars and radios get out of date quickly we think that everything gets out of date. Even the figure of Jesus has recently been refurbished and made to look like that of a successful business executive.

But to a person who has read the older writers that statement is provocative of rather suspicious thought. First as to just what Professor Dewey means and secondly as to how true it is. For if romantic love means essentially not so much extravagance of demeanor in the love relationship as a willful desire to love the mate of one's selection rather than any eligible who comes along or is picked for one — then it is certainly older than Dewey's paragraph would indicate. The phrase itself carries us as far as the Renaissance, and the late Greek "Daphnis and Chloe" is one example of a type of Greek love story which had at least the elements of romance in it. Indeed the works of Heliodorus and his colleagues are in their English translation entitled "The Greek Romances."

And if any reader thinks that Shakespeare is out of date he may be assured that the most up-to-date class in the community — the very disciples of Jung and Freud at whom Mr. Dewey is demurring — are all devoted to Shakespeare. They use his characters as examples of all the complexes. And while some of them may have carried this process to an extreme and put meanings into Shakespeare's incidental symbolism that were never there before, there is this much truth in the correlation: If we admit, as

I think we must, that in the main some of the chief analytic concepts are true, such as the Œdipus complex, then a keen observer of character in action, even though he had never heard of the Œdipus complex, would observe many things that were in fact symptoms of it. Naturally Shakespeare did not have the advantage of access to the works of Freud. But a conservative English literary critic, the late A. Clutton-Brock, has pointed out — in "Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' " — that all the famous riddles of motivation in that play are cleared up if we assume the truth of two of Freud's ideas, the mother-image and the Œdipus complex. Hamlet, it will be remembered, has been accused of everything from chronic indecision to madness. Yet in the play he is for the most part obviously sane, though he plays madness for a time, and in everything except the slaying of Claudius he shows decision.

When the play opens he is in love with Ophelia and his choice of her is dictated by the fact that she fills the specifications of the mother-image. Then Hamlet is told by the ghost of his father that his mother had been the paramour of Claudius and married him within two months after he had murdered her husband. And upon Hamlet he lays the task of revenge. This revelation, of course, deprives Hamlet, psychically, of

his mother. The woman whom he loved as a son has become alien and an enemy. And as her image is cast out of his heart it carries the image of Ophelia — because both are one — with it. And so when Hamlet afterward meets Ophelia he reviles her. But the shock has been so great that he unconsciously tries to forget that it has been administered. To plan revenge is natural and he is able to do it, but to carry his plans into execution involves so intense a realization of why he is doing it that he seeks excuse after excuse for delay.

How far Shakespeare knew melancholy at first hand, for many of the common symptoms of melancholia will be found in the play, and how far he had observed in real life some tragedy similar in its psychology to Hamlet's — though not in the facts and setting, which, of course, came from an earlier play — Mr. Clutton-Brock does not attempt to say. Nor is it important. The chief thing is that the play in spite of the critical puzzles it has started is a successful play æsthetically. It moves its audiences — which means that they accept Hamlet as a real person. Mr. Clutton-Brock simply shows that the motivation of this character who seems so real justifies us in feeling his reality and in feeling with him and for him.

However, I do not wish to give a wrong emphasis here and plead for the older works of literature on the ground that they are more up-to-date than they appear to be. After all there is in literature as in life what Lascelles Abercrombie has called an eternal present tense. We are, after all, the children of nature. Our emotions are expressible in a whole range of natural symbolism and like Antæus we renew our strength by contact with earth.

We do so for the most part unconsciously of course and consequently do not recognize our dependence. But the result of that lack of recognition is an atrophying of the æsthetic and probably of the moral personality. And the virtue of all great imaginative literature is that it keeps us in vital contact with the things of that eternal present tense. Thus the man to whom Shakespeare's nature imagery does not appeal will be a man not only ignorant of certain natural facts that Shakespeare knew but he will be lacking in a language through which alone certain feelings can be expressed. He will be cut off from the possibility of growth in certain directions. And from Shakespeare's nature imagery we might go on to discuss Shakespeare's sense of character, his sense of the pressure and poignancy of life and even his up-to-date ideas about æsthetics.

Thought moves in cycles, and if books were published with no authors' names, no titles and no dates, we might make some curious guesses about authorships and influences. For instance, I suppose that Aldous Huxley is the most up-to-date author we have. If the reader likes Mr. Huxley so much that he "can hardly wait for" the next book, I advise him to put in the waiting time reading an author whom, taken anonymously, he might well have mistaken for Aldous Huxley — Thomas Love Peacock. The one, like the other, is a critic of university education:

"When Scythrop grew up, he was sent, as usual, to a public school, where a little learning was painfully beaten into him, and from thence to the University, where it was carefully taken out of him; and he was sent home like a well-threshed ear of corn, with nothing in his head: having finished his education to the high satisfaction of the master and fellows of his college, who had, in testimony of their approbation, presented him with a silver fish-slice, on which his name figured at the head of a laudatory inscription in some semi-barbarous dialect of Anglo-Saxonized Latin."

And the one, like the other, is amused at the efforts of the elder to legislate for the morals of the younger or of the poorer. Thus we have the

Rev. Dr. Folliott in "Crochet Castle" being shocked at his host's works of art:

"... Now, sir, that little figure in the center of the mantelpiece,— as a grave paterfamilias, Mr. Crochet, with a fair nubile daughter, whose eyes are like the fish-pools of Heshbon,— I would ask you if you hold that figure to be altogether delicate?

"Mr. Crochet: The Sleeping Venus, sir? Nothing can be more delicate than the entire contour of the figure, the flow of the hair on the shoulders and neck, the form of feet and fingers. It is altogether a most delicate morsel.

"The Rev. Dr. Folliott: Why, in that sense, perhaps, it is as delicate as whitebait in July. But the attitude, sir, the attitude.

"Mr. Crochet: Nothing can be more natural, sir.

"The Rev. Dr. Folliott: That is the very thing, sir. It is too natural: too natural, sir: it lies for all the world like — I make no doubt, the pious cheesemonger, who recently broke its plaster facsimile over the head of the itinerant vendor, was struck by a certain similitude to the position of his own sleeping beauty, and felt his noble wrath thereby justly aroused."

The last point, by the way, is a beautiful example of what, in the chapter on æsthetics, we

have discussed under the term "psychic distance," that is to say a disinterested attitude which cheesemongers do not as a rule cultivate, and which reformers never give any one the credit for cultivating. So that the Rev. Dr. Folliot is very much afraid that these works of art will have the wrong influence on the Crochet servants; and to Mr. Crochet's argument, following Plato, that modesty may be learned from looking at such things, he replies:

"I must say that if I wished my footman to learn modesty I should not dream of sending him to school to a naked Venus."

Both of these authors have seen, too, the effect on comfortable people of seeing revolutionary ideas leave the printed page — where they are harmless — and take a part in affairs. To be sure, Mr. Flosky, in "Nightmare Abbey," speaks of the French rather than of the Russian revolution:

"Mr. Flosky: It is very certain, and much to be rejoiced at, that our literature is hag-ridden. Tea has shattered our nerves; late dinners make us slaves of indigestion; the French Revolution has made us shrink from the name of philosophy, and has destroyed, in the more refined part of the community (of which number I am one), all enthusiasm for political liberty. That part

of the *reading public* which shuns the solid food of reason for the light diet of fiction, requires a perpetual adhibition of *sauce piquante* to the palate of its depraved imagination . . . the devil has been cast into outer darkness, and now the delight of our spirits is to dwell on all the vices and blackest passions of our nature, tricked out in a masquerade dress of heroism and disappointed benevolence: the whole secret of which lies in forming combinations that contradict all our experience, and affixing the purple shred of some particular virtue to that precise character, in which we should be most certain not to find it in the living world; and making this single virtue not only redeem all the real and manifest vices of the character, but make them pass for necessary adjuncts, and indispensable accompaniments of the said virtue."

And Mr. Flosky even gives a recipe for the concoction of a novel which is still, or again, good and up to date:

"On the same principle, if a man knocks me down, and takes my purse and watch by main force, I turn him to account, and set him forth in a tragedy as a dashing young fellow, disinherited for his romantic generosity and full of a most amiable hatred of the world in general and of his own country in particular, and

of a most enlightened and chivalrous affection for himself: then, with the addition of a wild girl to fall in love with him, and a series of adventures in which they break all the Ten Commandments in succession (always, you will observe, for some sublime motive, which must be carefully analysed in its progress), I have as amiable a pair of tragic characters as ever issued from that new region of *belles-lettres* which I have called the Morbid Anatomy of Black Bile, and which is greatly to be admired and rejoiced at, as affording a fine scope for the exhibition of mental power."

This thesis of the eternal timeliness of the older authors has been illustrated above in its lighter aspects. It is true in a profounder sense. If there is one author whom I should recommend for general reading not only as a "classic" — in the loose sense of the word — but as a contemporary, it is Montaigne. Like the typical modernist Montaigne was a skeptic who lived in an age of authority — for our age, since the war, is an age of authority — as Tom Mooney and Mary Ware Dennett could tell us and as Sacco and Vanzetti testified with their lives. And Montaigne was as subjective and introspective as any modern.

One of the most startling evidences of

modernity in Montaigne is his commentary on the general subject of love and marriage. One could imagine that he had read Havelock Ellis on the subject and was endeavoring to popularize him. In a day when woman's status was still purely instrumental, and when she had no economic power to meet man on equal terms and insist on being treated as an end in herself, Montaigne stresses the necessity of so treating her in amorous relationships. When the existent "authorities" on love went from the extreme of regarding woman as a slave to the other extreme of Platonic romanticizing, Montaigne treats love much as Aldous Huxley, for instance, would treat it — the romanticism tempered by a strong dash of utilitarianism. In his book, "The Modern Temper," Joseph Wood Krutch has recently written of love in the twentieth century as "the death of a value," arguing that as soon as it was freed from the old restraints it flattened out into a mere sensation that soon became boredom. Montaigne made exactly the same observation:

"Marriage has, for its share, usefulness, justice, honor, and constancy; a stale but more durable pleasure. Love is grounded on pleasure alone, and it is indeed more gratifying to the senses, keener and more acute; a pleasure stirred and kept alive by difficulties. There must be a sting and a smart

in it. It ceases to be love if it have no shafts and no fire. The liberality of the ladies is too profuse in marriage, and blunts the edge of affection and desire. Observe what pains Lycurgus and Plato take, in their Laws, to avoid that disadvantage.

"Women are not by any means to blame when they reject the rules of life which have been introduced into the world, seeing that it is the men who made them without their consent. Intrigues between, wranglings between them and ourselves is only natural; the closest agreement we enjoy with them is still attended with tumults and storms."

Montaigne was one of the first experimental psychologists, and he anticipated Coué and Freud. As this book is not a classic it would probably be banned if I quoted one of Montaigne's experiments which was performed upon a young man on the day of his marriage and demonstrated irrefutably the power of the imagination — that, indeed, is the title of the essay — over the physical body.

For people of certain temperaments, Montaigne is still the safest guide to this predicament called life. The sensitive person who is inclined to be over-credulous and enthusiastic is sure to be hurt sooner or later, and he may avoid some of those hurts by taking to heart such kindly

and "unofficial" advice as this from the essay in which Montaigne talks of himself as a public official — for he was mayor of Bordeaux for a time:

"As far as in me lies, I give all my attention to myself; and even here I would willingly curb my feelings and keep them from plunging too deeply into an object that I possess by the favour of others and over which Fortune has more right than I. So that even as regards health, which I value so highly, it would be well if I did not so passionately desire and dote upon it as to make sickness insupportable. . . .

"If at times I have been driven to take up the management of other people's affairs, I have promised to take them in hand, but not into my lungs and liver; to take them upon my shoulders, not to identify myself with them; to look after them, yes; to take them passionately to heart, certainly not. . . .

"Those who know how much they owe to themselves, how much they are in duty bound to themselves, discover that Nature has given them this charge, which will keep them fully enough occupied: 'Thou hast ample business at home; do not abandon it.'

"Men hire themselves out. Their faculties are not exercised for themselves, but for those to

whom they become slaves. Their lodgers make themselves at home in their house, not they themselves. This common humor is not to my liking. We must husband the freedom of our soul, and not let it out except on lawful occasions, which are very few, if we judge sanely. Observe the people who are accustomed to let themselves be seized and carried away; they do so on all occasions, in little matters as well as great, in those which do not concern them as well as in those that do. They thrust themselves forward indiscriminately wherever there is work to do and anything to bind them. Not to be in a state of bustle and excitement, is to them death. *They seek business only for business' sake* (Seneca)....

"Whatever they will and carry out they do with all their will power and intensity. There are so many slippery places that, for greater safety, we must glide rather lightly and superficially over this world; we must slide over it, and not break through. Even sensual pleasures are painful when they are intense."

People of a different mold may prefer as a guide that noted author the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. But he could never forget that he was an emperor and a stoic. No wonder that, pagan though he was, he has been a favorite author of

Christian moralists. He kept up the dignity of the profession of ethical lecturing. And he would never have tried psychological experiments on his newly married friends or admitted that sex has its amusing side. But Montaigne is perfectly willing to chat with us on our own rung of the ladder, however low a rung it is. And if he knows that high places make us dizzy he will not tease us by pointing to higher rungs and bawling "Excelsior."

And partly because his essays are short, and more deeply because they are frank and pleasant and do not point too abruptly aloft, we should read him, and unless we are wedded to Elizabethan prose we should read him in the best modern translation, that of E. J. Trechmann (Oxford University Press) and read him not only at a study table but carry him about in our pockets.

The classics, then, as classics, we may read as part of serious culture, but for reading which is pleasurable and which builds up and strengthens our own personalities we should regard the classics not as monuments of the past, but as opportunities for personal friendships. There are classical writers who chill us and there are others whom we may take to our breasts. The veil of their idiom should not be an obstruction: it is

diaphanous and easily rent. A superficial glance at the works of Sir Thomas Browne, for instance, may give us the impression that he is a pedant. Our eyes may first alight on the title of his treatise: "Pseudodoxia Epidemica." No, that will never do, and in search of something light we turn to Nathan's "The American Credo." But we have turned without knowing it completely round and we are facing the same thing. For "Pseudodoxia Epidemica" is "American Credo" in Latin — except that the "American" is a free translation: the subject of both books is the same — popular fallacies and superstitions.

As I am not trying to cover the field, which would be impossible, but merely to give examples of the personality values and the eternal timeliness of old books, I shall end by one more example of an old author throwing an amusing side light on the sort of question we take to be contemporary. You have doubtless engaged in disputes with people who did not like modern art, who thought that a picture which was distorted or abstract was something horrible, whose approach to a picture was always "literary." You may have wished for some horrible example of what happens when criticism of pictures is based on that prejudice. And you will find the very thing in Boswell's life of Samuel Johnson. That

large and learned lexicographer who fed his omniscience on tea, was in the enviable (and rare) position of being a critic with a pull. And when an artist was rejected by the Royal Academy, he naturally applied to the Doctor for help. Johnson wrote a letter and the trick was done: the rejection was set aside and the picture hung. Boswell proceeds:

"The subject, as I recollect, was the Deluge, at that point of time when the water was verging to the top of the last uncovered mountain. Near to the spot was seen the last of the antediluvian race, exclusive of those who were saved in the ark of Noah. This was one of those giants, then the inhabitants of the earth, who had still strength to swim, and with one of his hands held aloft his infant child. Upon the small remaining dry spot appeared a famished lion, ready to spring at the child and devour it. Mr. Lowe told me that Johnson said to him, 'Sir, your picture is noble and probable.' 'A compliment indeed (said Mr. Lowe), from a man who cannot lie and who cannot be mistaken.' "

A verdict, by the way, which would still carry in Tennessee.

CHAPTER SIX

Poetry in General

It is a commonplace observation of course that only one person reads poetry for every fifty who read even good prose. One reason for this is that ours is a hurried age, and you can read prose in a hurry but you cannot read poetry in a hurry. Another reason is that present-day poetry is, for the most part, more subjective than prose. It tells a story not of the outer world but of inner states. It is more likely to be self-revelation than world revelation. And so, every few years a poem that is objective, that deals with some aspect of the outer world scores a great success. Witness the astonishing impression made about twenty years ago by Masefield's series of narrative poems beginning with "The Everlasting Mercy" and the more recent and even larger success of Stephen Vincent Benet's "John Brown's Body."

Unless people are reminded by such poems as these that poetry really deals or can deal with the affairs of men, they lapse into thinking it

to be anything from a sort of mysticism to a subtle form of immorality. They think either of Wordsworth and his "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality" or of Oscar Wilde and the early paganism of Swinburne. If their school teachers have given them their first ideas about poetry they have probably thought of the poet as a seer and prophet and his words as a sort of gospel — to be read with reverence.

As a matter of fact poets should never be regarded *a priori* with reverence — and they never are by their fellow poets. It was Keats who made the remark that there was no person so unpoetic as a poet. The wrong attitude, the attitude of indiscriminate worship, is well illustrated by a story about a visiting English poet at an American college for women. The poet told me the tale himself. He was lecturing at this college and was being entertained at luncheon. Surrounded by lady faculty members and looked up to by rows and rows of girls, the only man in the room — and made to feel not so much that he was a man among women as that he was a poet among prose people, he felt a little uncomfortable. And it was evident that the ladies near him did not quite know how they were expected to talk to a poet. In an effort to get a natural, easy conversation going, the poet

turned to his neighbor, the principal of the college, and remarked, "Let's tell one another the great English poems that we hate the most." The lady addressed looked at him with pain and reproach in her eyes — in dilute form, of course — and answered, "Wouldn't it be nicer to tell one another the great English poems that we love the most?"

An antidote for that sort of thing is to be found in John Synge's preface to his "Poems and Translations." It is a short preface and I shall quote most of it:

"I have often thought that at the side of the poetic diction, which every one condemns, modern verse contains a great deal of poetic material, using poetic in the same special sense. The poetry of exaltation will always be the highest; but when men lose their poetic feeling for ordinary life, and cannot write poetry of ordinary things, their exalted poetry is likely to lose its strength of exaltation, in the way men cease to build beautiful churches when they have lost happiness in building shops.

"Many of the older poets, such as Villon and Herrick and Burns, used the whole of their personal life as their material, and the verse written in this way was read by strong men, and thieves, and deacons, and not by little cliques only. Then,

in the town writing of the eighteenth century, ordinary life was put into verse that was not poetry, and when poetry came back with Coleridge and Shelley, it went into verse that was not always human.

"In these days poetry is usually a flower of evil or good; but it is the timber of poetry that wears most surely, and there is no timber that has not strong roots among the clay and worms.

"Even if we grant that exalted poetry can be kept successful by itself, the strong things of life are needed in poetry also, to show that what is exalted or tender is not made by feeble blood. It may almost be said that before verse can be human again it must learn to be brutal. . . ."

Synge's earlier compatriots in poetry knew that it was the finest medium one could choose for the exacting work of cursing people. In James Stephens' "Collected Poems" will be found a beautiful piece of cursing which, if I remember aright, was originally published by the author as a free translation of a poem by one of the Gaelic singers:

A GLASS OF BEER

The lanky hank of a she in the inn over there
Nearly killed me for asking the loan of a glass of beer;

May the devil grip the whey-faced slut by the hair,
And beat bad manners out of her skin for a year.

That parboiled ape, with the toughest jaw you will see
On virtue's path, and a voice that would rasp the dead,
Came roaring and raging the minute she looked at me,
And threw me out of the house on the back of my head!

If I asked her master he'd give me a cask a day;
But she, with the beer at hand, not a gill would arrange!
May she marry a ghost and bear him a kitten, and may
The High King of Glory permit her to get the mange.

The sentimental person who has been brought up to think of poetry in terms of Longfellow, Whittier and the curls and toga-like cloak of Lord Tennyson will try to tell you that that is not poetry. But any one who approaches it in the empirical spirit in which the gentleman approached a glass of beer — "Looks like beer —

smells like beer — tastes like beer — darned if it ain't beer!" (pardon the vulgar illustration but this is a vulgar poem and about beer at that) — any one, I say, who approaches the poem in that spirit will have to admit that it is poetry. For the poet makes us realize, very vividly, a situation, both in its outer aspect and in his relation to it. Notice, too, the subtlety of the phrase "not a gill would arrange." Not, you will see, "not a gill will give" — for he did not regard it as exactly a gift. Gift is a beggar's word. "Arrange" is the term of a gentleman and a diplomat. It is a word which would have saved everybody's face had that barmaid been willing to listen to reason.

Poetry then must not be defined in terms of the loftiness of its subject matter. Unfortunately the people who have tried to define it have tended to use mystical or "emotive" language. By the latter term is meant language which does not have a definite meaning but which serves to call forth an attitude. Thus I. A. Richards, to whom with C. K. Ogden — "The Meaning of Meaning" being their contribution to the philosophy of language — we owe the term, quotes a definition by John W. Mackail that poetry is "a continuous substance or energy whose progress is immortal." That, says Mr. Richards, is the lan-

guage of evoking emotional attitudes, not of definition. And a book-lovers' society once offered a prize for a definition of poetry that should itself be beautiful — which is like asking for a definition of a bathtub which shall be wet.

I only know of one definition of poetry which really is a definition and that is Lascelles Abercrombie's: "It is the expression of imaginative experience, valued simply as such and significant simply as such, in the communicable state given by language which employs every available and appropriate device."

I read that to a class once and was met with the objection that some poetry is not "imaginative" but realistic. That, however, is a misunderstanding of Mr. Abercrombie's language. The experience may be as objective as you please. Only it must be held as an experience, in the imagination, before it can be precipitated as poetry. Thus, if our Irish poet had not held before himself, so to speak, the whole situation of his humiliation, it would not have become an imaginative experience. To explicate the definition further, if he had told the story not for the sake of vividly putting over just what happened or how he felt about it, but as an argument for abolishing barmaids, he would have achieved not poetry but oratory: art must always

be for its own sake, a consummation. And lastly, by telling us that the language must communicate the poet's experience and that it must do so by using every available and appropriate device — but not all the devices at once — Mr. Abercrombie makes his definition cover free verse as well as regular verse, rhymed as well as unrhymed. And he distinguishes verse from prose because certain of the devices used in poetry are not used in prose.

Before considering the devices used in poetry, however — and we shall consider them in some detail because unless you are aware of what the poet is doing you miss half of the performance — let us consider what poetry is in its more general aspects.

Pater remarked that all the arts strive to the condition of music: "Precisely because in music it is impossible to distinguish the form from the substance or matter, the subject from the expression." It would be better, however, to say that in all the arts, in so far as we have successful work, we achieve this union. In everyday writing where no attempt to be artistic is made words may merely represent ideas. In artistic writing the words not only represent but to an extent present ideas directly. This may be done in elementary and trivial ways as in some forms

of what is called onomatopœic writing — a use of words akin to the uses of sound in "program" music — or it may be done so subtly as to defy analysis. In poetry it is largely done through taking advantage of the connotative values as well as the denotative values of words and through making the movements of sentences or rhythmic groups expressive of the subject-matter. Here, for example, is a short poem by Ralph Hodgson entitled "February" ("Poems," Macmillan):

A few tossed thrushes save
That caroled less than cried
Against the dying rave
And moan that never died,
No bird sang then; no thorn,
No tree was green beside
Them only never shorn —
The few by all the winds
And chill mutations born
Of Winter's many minds
Abused and whipt in vain —
Swarth yew and ivy kinds
And iron breeds germane.

We may contrast that with the beginning of a prose description of February from Nicholas

Breton's "The Twelve Moneths" (recently reprinted by the Golden Cockerel Press):

"It is now February, and the sun is gotten up a Cocke-stride of his climbing, the Valleyes now are painted white, and the brookes are full of water.... The Ayre is sharp and piercing, and the winds blow cold: the Taverns and the Inns seldom lack guests, & the Ostler knows how to gain by his Hay...."

Breton, we see, has a straight story to tell and he tells it in order. Why cannot the poet be as direct? For the simple reason that he is not telling us, as Breton is, interesting facts about February. He has taken one aspect of the month and he is determined to make us imaginatively relive it. A February gale, were we out in it, would bully us, would delay us, so that we should not always go from one point to another in a straight line. And so the poet delays us with descriptive clauses before he lets us get to his fixed points. To have said directly that no bird sang — and then added, except thrushes, would not have achieved the same effect. And the same baffling route is taken to lead us to his stoical iron breeds of trees.

In our chapter on æsthetics we have already disposed of the didactic fallacy in art and of the idea that art does not have an intellectual as well as a sensuous content. As compared with

music, poetry has a great deal of explicit intellectual content, although certain contemporary currents in verse writing and in criticism have obscured this. The oldest and most widely spread of these currents, of course, is the continuing momentum of the romantic movement. Many of the older readers of poetry, brought up in that movement, are unable to see that Pope was a poet. They echo Oscar Wilde's epigram about there being two ways of disliking poetry — one of which is to like Pope.

But already that current has met the countercurrent of a sort of neo-classicism which is expressed, among other ways, by a new appreciation of Pope. Both John W. Mackail and Lytton Strachey have recently published lectures on Pope, and Edith Sitwell is deliberately trying in her poetry to reach beyond the romantic movement to the sort of poetry which it supplanted. Incidentally she is now engaged on a life of Pope. Crabbe would also be regarded by the romanticists of to-day, I think, as a prosaic poet. Certainly he was a realist — more of a realist in his narrative poems than Masefield. But unlike the realist poet of to-day he was not afraid to be intellectual and to comment.

For instance, I was lately reading Mr. Masters' realistic poem, "The Fate of the Jury." He is

writing blank verse — that is to say he is using a convention which enables one to do certain things and by the same token prevents one from doing other things. And when he essays prosaic realism in that form, which is after all poetic, he achieves not straight realism but incongruity — as in such lines as

To fool plebeians for a railroad's good

and

And in my limousine were inseparable.

It occurred to me to see how Crabbe, writing in a similar measure, though in rhymed couplets, achieved his "drab" effects. Did he, I wondered, sound as ridiculous as that? I turned at random to "The Parish Register" and found this part of a description of a forced marriage:

Next at our altar stood a luckless pair,
Brought by strong passions and a warrant there;
By long, rent cloak, hung loosely, strove the bride,
From ev'ry eye what all perceived to hide.

Note how the realistic detail is given but in more than its bare statement; it is at once stated

and interpreted and so is given a dramatic force that it would otherwise lack.

It is true that bare detail often has poetic value, but the way to express it is not through a convention. And blank verse may be so used that it becomes a very transparent medium — having apparently all the freedom of prose. Of such blank verse Robert Frost is the great American master; indeed Alfred Kreymborg, writing of Frost in "Our Singing Strength," calls his medium "free blank verse" although that is a contradiction in terms unless we take it as a truism. All good blank verse is free in that it does not present a strict pattern. But it is not free verse because the pattern is always in the background. Here is an example of the manner in which Mr. Frost gives us free, colloquial writing but in terms of iambic pentameter:

Apples? New Hampshire has them, but unsprayed,
With no suspicion in stem-end or blossom-end
Of vitriol or arsenate of lead
And not so good for anything but cider.

The English poet who has most consistently exploited this type of verse is Lascelles Abercrombie. Here is an example from a dialogue, "Ham and Eggs":

The Youth:

We're all machine in the sheds. The roof
Is full of rumbling axles, and you walk
Dodging the flapping criss-cross of the belts
That bring the power slanting to the benches
I run a mortising machine myself.

All through English poetry there has run this stream of homely realistic celebration of the common things of life and the stories of common people about their business; we have it from Chaucer to W. W. Gibson and Mr. Abercrombie. There has always been, too, a philosophic tradition in English poetry sometimes Platonic as in the mystic poets, sometimes rationalistic, and at times skeptical and disillusioned. And that tradition does not imply either didacticism or the Victorian idea that the poet was a "seer" who delivered something called "poetic truth" which was higher and truer and in less need of verification than ordinary truth.

But the doctrine which to-day, succeeding the romanticists in this respect, emphasizes the non-intellectual side of poetry, is the popular deification of the unconscious. The poet, we are told, is a dreamer who dreams while awake, and if we

are to understand his poetry we must do so in psychoanalytic terms. Some of the poets — notably Robert Graves — have tried to make conscious use of psychoanalytic concepts in their poetry, but have not improved it thereby; and some critics have tried to tell us that psychoanalysis gives us the key to poetry. The most extreme of these is Albert Mordell who would have us read poems in terms of their latent rather than of their patent contents, and would tell us that Cowper had a mother-complex because at an age when a man should be above such nonsense he wrote a poem to the memory of his mother.

It is true that many poems are dreamlike in their quality and content, and even the results of things dreamed. But even then they are poems and not materials for psychoanalysis. Coleridge, for instance, dreamed "Kubla Khan," but recent research has discovered that the images of that poem so far from being the products of Coleridge's subconscious mind were nearly all taken from "Purchas his Pilgrimage" and one or two other travel books, while a few of them came from Milton. In one of his books Mr. Mordell quotes Ben Jonson's lyric, "Drink To Me Only with Thine Eyes" as an example of a poem showing that the writer had some sort of olfactory

complex. Unfortunately for the theory Ben Jonson found the inspiration for the poem in a Greek original and merely translated it. Much of the imagery of Mr. Yeats which might easily tempt us to analytical interpretation, such things, for example, as

Red rose, proud rose, sad rose of all my days,
Be near me while I sing the ancient ways

is taken over consciously from purely conventional systems of imagery — that of the Rosicrucian system of occult philosophy, for example.

A difficulty which seems to be acute for many modern readers of poetry is that of doctrine. Can you enjoy "Paradise Lost," for example, if you do not believe in Milton's theological machinery? This problem seems to trouble Mr. I. A. Richards a good deal. He has devoted one small book, "Science and Poetry," to the matter and he comes back to it in his "Practical Criticism." I think, however, the matter may be taken more simply than he takes it. After all, no good poetry deals in doctrine as such although it may deal in the experiences which, when generalized or explained, give us doctrine.

Thus it is silly to say that because you believe in "poetic truth" and Wordsworth, writing as

a poet, affirmed immortality in his "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," the doctrine must be true. But it is just as silly to refuse to let oneself enjoy that poem because one may not happen to believe in immortality. For primarily the poem is an account of Wordsworth's actual retrospective experience of childhood and the dimming of its glory.

I knew an educated man who liked poetry but refused to read Francis Thompson's on the ground that Thompson was a Roman Catholic and exploited Roman Catholicism in his poetry. It is true that he exploited the images of Roman Catholicism — but they are perfectly good images and he makes them express real experiences. For even if you do not believe in the truth of a single doctrine of revealed religion you cannot deny the existence of certain feelings which have been collectively called "the religious experience." Francis Thompson could make the religious experience a very exciting and real thing:

I fled him down the nights and down the days
I fled him down the arches of the years;
I fled him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from him and under running laughter.

Up vistaed hope I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears.
From those strong feet that followed, followed,
after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat — and a Voice beat
More instant than the feet —
All things betray thee, who betrayest me.

I have spoken of "poetic truth" as though it were only what one might call biographical truth: an account of experience. But the poetry that is not biographical, which would include objective stories of events in the lives of men and also the subjective poetry which deals with love — and that is not philosophical, deals with Nature. Indeed throughout the history of poetry we see communication of man with Nature ever becoming wider and deeper. And your mechanist is only too likely to dismiss that whole movement as a survival of animism. But while we have to do our scientific thinking in mechanistic terms — that is to say, in terms that are ultimately those of mathematical measurements, we

live in a world of qualities. Whether we say with the realists that those qualities are in the world, or with the idealists that they are imposed on the otherwise unknown outer world by our human mind, the fact is that we live in terms of them. And in either event, therefore, essential poetry is a method of getting into an ever closer rapport with the quality of things.

Its method is not the method of thought but the method — to put it in a word — of metaphor. For metaphor in poetry as every critic from Aristotle has recognized, is no mere decoration or ornament — though, of course, it may be used frivolously. It is an instrument of revelation.

Much poetry, of course, especially the realistic poetry which we began this chapter by illustrating, is not essential poetry: it gives us what can be arrived at by ordinary thought. The contrast between that and essential poetry has never to my knowledge been brought out more clearly than by an English critic, J. A. Chapman, in an essay in "Papers on Shelley, Wordsworth and Others" (Oxford University Press). After quoting Matthew Arnold to the effect that it is not Linnæus or Cavendish or Cuvier who gives us "the true sense of animals, or water, or plants, who seizes their secret for us, who makes us par-

ticipate in their life; it is Shakespeare with his

daffodils
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty;

"it is Wordsworth, with his

voice . . . heard
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides; . . ."

In such passages, Mr. Chapman goes on, a secret is revealed. Of the quotation from Shakespeare he tells us:

"It is the bringing together in our minds of the daffodil and the swallow's coming that makes clear to us that our thought of the daffodil is not what it would be, if the daffodil had its flowers in autumn. It is the thought of beauty softening something harsh, as the beauty of a child, or a woman, or music might soften something harsh in a man, that brings out so much more of what the daffodil is. It is seen as more beautiful for coming in the spring; for coming when our hearts are empty of beauty because of the winter sleep. Then there is seen to be something of courage suggested by the shape, poise, and color of the daffodil — there

is, that is to say, after Shakespeare has opened our eyes to it. That courage, which it is enough for us that the poet should just hint at, is shown in the light of the swallow's daring. It is only in inspired poetry that so much can be given in so few words; so that one's definition of poetry might be that it is the inspired word."

And that sort of thing, it will be seen, cannot be achieved by thinking. By intellectual thinking, that is: its method is essentially metaphorical, the method of seeing one thing in terms of another, or rather, as Mr. Chapman put it, of seeing the essence of one thing in the light of another. And where the qualities of things are concerned this is the only method we have — for qualities can be pointed to but not otherwise defined.

Poetry, then, is not a daydream or an amusement but has a real objective reference to the world in which we live. Not to know that world as it is revealed in poetry is to truncate the pyramid of one's own existence. It is to live in a partial world instead of a complete world. By which I do not mean a completed world. For even if it should turn out that the world may be viewed monistically from some absolutist point of view, from a poetic point of view it is irreducibly pluralistic.

CHAPTER SEVEN

How to Read Poetry

I HAVE stressed the fact that poetry is not of necessity high-brow, that it may be very simple, and yet that relatively few people read it. The reason for this — I should say the chief reason, for there are others — is that the average person is blind to the material of poetry — words and verbal rhythms. A recent writer on æsthetics, Professor D. W. Prall, in "Æsthetic Judgment" reminds us that every art is in terms of its own "æsthetic surface": thus the æsthetic surface of a painting is space and color, the æsthetic surface of music is sound in ordered sequences, and the æsthetic surface of poetry is not only words, but words in pattern and in rhythm.

Now in painting and in music the æsthetic surface is what first strikes us. But we are so used to reading words for their intellectual meaning that when we come to poetry we have a tendency (that is, those of us who are not habitual poetry readers) to read it in such a hurried

way that we do not even see its æsthetic surface. We get bare meaning and not even all of the meaning —since the poet uses words for their connotations and associations as well as for their dictionary definitions. His subtler devices we pass over unseeing and unhearing. And then we wonder why we do not "get" poetry.

Mr. Prall remarks that it is absurd for any one to judge a work of art unless he is familiar with the particular æsthetic surface involved:

"One who actually fails to distinguish minor thirds from majors, or the various melodic intervals from one another — not that he must know their names, of course, but that he must recognize their specific sounds — cannot possibly discriminate either the melodic or the harmonic patterns of the music that he hears. He does not, in fact, hear the actual music at all, but is perhaps vaguely pleased or bored by a confused sensuous experience, which no doubt sets up much non-auditory feeling and imagery and even ideation."

That is true of all the arts, and we may apply it to poetry by simply paraphrasing it:

One who fails to distinguish rising from falling rhythm or the various types of feet from one another — not that he must know their names, but that he must recognize their movement —

cannot possibly discriminate the characters or the patterns of the verses he reads. He does not, in fact, hear the poetry at all, or feel or see it, and gets nothing from it but some vague ideation.

In poetry the idea loses its value when dissociated from its sensuous embodiment. Fortunately, however, the technique of poetry — in its theory, that is, emphatically not in its application — is quite simple. As I shall proceed to demonstrate, it can all — in so far as it concerns the reader of poetry — be told in a chapter. That it must not be underestimated, however, I shall show by pointing out the "elements" that we meet in the simplest possible sort of verse, verse in fact that has no "meaning" to distract the attention from its "form":

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe . . .

That, of course, is the first stanza only of Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky," but it will be enough for our purpose. In the first place we note that it is a stanza of four lines, alternate lines rhyming, and that it is written in feet of

two syllables each, the first three lines having four feet or eight syllables, and the fourth line having three feet or six syllables. Any one who has an ear will admit that the lines are musical. That effect is achieved by the succession of vowel sounds and consonant sounds in each line. They are so placed that the throat muscles proceed from one word to another with a minimum of exertion, for one thing. For another there is a great variety in the vowel sounds, and as each vowel sound has its own pitch, an actual melody is rendered. But this variety is accompanied by a similarity — the repetition of the same vowel sound in the line and from line to line, known as assonance. And there is also the repetition of the same initial consonant sound — alliteration. Throughout there is what is called onomatopœia. That means a sound that directly suggests a sense. Of course in the ordinary meaning of sense there is none in this stanza, and yet the words are so expressive that they almost force you to make pictures to correspond to them.

The most important — and the omnipresent — device for utilizing the æsthetic surfaces of poetic material is rhythm. Prose, of course, has rhythm too, but in verse the rhythm is regularized. How regularized has been the subject of a great deal of discussion, much of it dull, aca-

demic and misleading. One reason for the fruitlessness of the discussion has been the anxiety of English theorists to show that English verse is scanned on the same principles as Greek verse, and another their anxiety to find one simple principle which will cover all kinds of verse — ancient and modern, and maybe music as well.

One theory that still has a few supporters is that both verse and musical rhythms are based on the principle that rhythm in time is made by some phenomenon — a "beat" or "accent" in music and an "accented syllable" or "ictus" in poetry occurring at equal intervals of time apart. That supposition is, indeed, the basis of musical notation, but even in music nobody ever keeps strict time. In verse the theory is demonstrably false. Here is a line with the accents marked — the third of Robert Bridges' "London Snow":

When men were all asleep the snow came flying
In large white flakes falling on the city brown
Stéalthily and perpétually séttling and lóosely
lying.... .....

It is obvious that from the enunciation of "Steal–" to the enunciation of "–pet–" takes much longer than the time from "Loos–" to "ly–" and this instance could be added to again and again.

However, this is no place to enter into prosodic disputes. In what follows I shall give in the simplest possible terms what seems to be the outcome of the sanest opinion of the present day. And as three of my authorities, Robert Bridges, Lascelles Abercrombie, and Adelaide Crapsey, are well known as poets, while the fourth, Professor Rudmose-Brown of Trinity College, Dublin, has also written poetry, we shall be following the safest sort of authority — the person who speaks after practice as well as after thought.

Of course these poets and theorists do not agree on details, but they all agree in opposing the idea that verse rhythm is something simple which can be expressed in one formula. Mr. Bridges and Professor T. B. Rudmose-Brown and also the late Thomas MacDonagh, the Irish poet who was executed by the English for being too hasty in his desire for an Irish Republic, all agree on one point — that English verse is written in accordance with two different principles. Mr. Bridges calls these two methods syllabic verse and accentual verse. And — this is a point which should not be overlooked — neither of them is an artifice; each is based on a natural tendency in human speech. You have all heard the political orator, and the sharp-eared among you may have

noticed how he has a tendency to accentuate alternate syllables:

"I RISE to PUT in NOMinAtion ONE who HAS the LOVE, esTEEM, and VENerAtion of EVr'y CITiZEN of ILLinOIS. . . ."

On the other hand, in ordinary conversation or in excited speech we speak not only in phrases but in rising and falling units of sound inside the phrase, each unit leading up to or falling down from a strongly accented syllable — and each representing one expulsion of breath. These "monopressures," as they have been called, are the natural "feet" of accentual verse. That tendency in English verse is our Anglo-Saxon or native inheritance. The tendency to make the syllable the unit, accenting alternate syllables, we took over from the French, who got it from later Latin poets, barbarians who had forgotten the rules of quantity which the Latins borrowed from the Greek, and only knew that the lines in the regular stanza forms should have so many syllables apiece.

Mr. Bridges thinks that the two styles should not be mixed, but as a matter of fact they seem to have a tendency to coalesce, and the logic of the situation hardly seems to support Mr. Bridges' purism — although his practice is a brilliant vindication of it as a rule for himself. But

first let us exhibit the two styles in their pure forms. How did Milton write his greatest verse? He tells us, in the "preface" to "Paradise Lost." After explaining why he does not use "Rime" he goes on to say that "true musical delight" consists only "in apt Numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another."

By "verse" there he means line (literally a "turn": our substitution of the word verse for stanza is bad usage) and by drawing out the sense he means that he lets phrases and sentences run over from one line to the next instead of carpentering them to end pat with the line — as Pope does, for instance. By "quantity" of syllables he does not mean Greek quantity but the number of syllables to each line; and as Mr. Bridges has shown in his "Milton's Prosody," Milton regarded the heroic line as normally containing ten syllables. When he admitted more than ten he assumed "elision" — which occurs, for instance, in the first line of "Paradise Lost":

Of man's first disobedience and the fruit

Milton would count four syllables to "disobedience" so that the line, if scanned in groups of two syllables, would read:

Of man's/first dis/obe/dience and/the fruit

although as a matter of strict pronunciation, the word is a five syllable one: di-so-be-di-ence. That is an elision brought about by our common speech habits, but Milton elaborated for himself certain rules admitting other sorts of elision. For instance he wrote — and had printed:

Above th' Aonian Mount while it pursues.

But he certainly did not pronounce it that way. For it may be taken as almost an invariable rule that any verse in which words have to be mispronounced or jumbled together to make the line scan (there may be an occasional exception where it is done to achieve some special effect) is bad writing. Then, if he did not say the line that way, why did he go to the trouble of printing it that way? Simply to indicate that he was writing the type of verse in which elisions are used.

But, if they are "fictions," if we disregard them in saying the verse, why are they used?

The answer to this question is vital for an understanding of the difference between syllabic and accentual verse. When you say to yourself, as Milton said to himself, "I shall regulate my verse by the number of syllables in each line, admitting over the usual ten only such syllables as may be elided," you automatically cut off a

certain number of the possible speech rhythms of the language, and you give yourself a rule of reading the verse which compensates you for what you have thus lost by enabling you to get very delicate rhythmic effects in the territory to which you are confining yourself. For one thing you do not have to trouble yourself about speech accents — you may let them come where they will. Thus Shakespeare, writing a syllabic line, can write one with only two accents in it:

I do/remém/ber an/apó/theca/ry

and yet it scans because we are scanning by syllable counting and not by accent. The last syllable in that line does not count: it is a "feminine ending."

Now the above may sound very pedantic and hair-splitting, but it must be taken into account if we are going to read syllabic verse properly. For too many of us follow the example of the schoolboy who thinks that blank verse means verse with an accent on every other syllable, and who therefore begins to read "Paradise Lost" by saying:

Of MAN'S first DIS o BEDience
AND the FRUIT

which is of course not beautiful and not even natural. Nobody ever spoke like that — except a political orator bent on nominating a crook. But when this type of verse is written by some one who understands its possibilities, very beautiful effects may be obtained. Here is an instructive example from Tennyson's "Enoch Arden." Annie has consented, after long doubt and a presentiment against it, to marry Philip:

So these were wed and merrily rang the bells,
Merrily rang the bells and they were wed.
But never merrily beat Annie's heart.

Now on a careless reading or one that depended on accents alone it might seem as if Tennyson had repeated one word there three times. But as far as the sound goes we do not have one word repeated three times, but three soundings of the same syllable group — and each sounding corresponding to a subtle change of meaning.

If we scan the lines by syllables we shall see that the first "merrily" coming at the end of a foot has a heavy beat — it may represent the first clanging note of the bells. In the second use the first two syllables make a foot of their own and so we accentuate the word in a more

level manner. And in the third use, the first syllable of the word is part of one foot and the last two form a foot of their own, giving the word yet a third manner of pronunciation: stretching it out, as it were, for the emphasis which marks the contradiction between what is going on in Annie's heart and the conventional merriment of the outer aspect of the occasion:

So these/were wed/and mer/rily rang/the bells,
Merri/ly rang/the bells/and they/were wed.
But nev/er mer/rily/beat Ann/ie's heart....

As I have said, syllabic verse and accentual verse — of which the three lines quoted from Bridges' "London Snow" may serve for the present as an example — have tended to coalesce. This is because English is a language in which stress or accent plays a big part, and as most poets write by ear rather than by rule nature simply asserted itself. We see this in Shakespeare who began by writing syllabic verse, and as he explored the possibilities of the language gradually came to make five stresses rather than five syllable groups the basis of his verse.

In modern times Coleridge was the first poet to consciously differentiate the two forms of verse and in "Christabel" he promised to write

"on a new principle; namely that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables." But the old manner was firmly entrenched in his ear and in that poem he hardly keeps his promise. The first line:

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock

does have four real accents. But pretty soon we have lines like

Pass as lightly as you will
Sounds as of a chapel bell

in which, if we are to read the verse with four accents we must accentuate such words as "as" and "of." But they do not need an accent — as far as the sense is concerned — and so when you give them even the very slight emphasis necessary to mark off the meter you are doing it only to make the line scan, and because they follow unaccented syllables. In other words, those lines and some others like them are really syllabic.

But Mr. Bridges has followed Coleridge in writing accentual verse and he has been very consistent in his accentual work. He has also revived strict syllabic verse, and examples of it

will be found throughout his earlier work and notably in his "New Verse" (1925) and in "The Testament of Beauty" (1929). In these books he has used a twelve syllable line and he uses the same types of elision which Milton used in "Paradise Lost." The resulting freedom in accentuation enables him to put almost any speech rhythms into his verse, and he is able to incorporate direct quotations from prose writers — a convenience in a philosophical poem which "The Testament of Beauty" is. These words are written before the publication of the work in America and so I cannot quote from the poems, but here is an example of the direct quotation of prose from one of the syllabic poems in "New Verse" a humorously philosophic address to a parrot:

I am writing these verses to you and grieve that
you should be
Absolument incapable de les comprendre,
Tu, Polle, nescis ista nec potes scire.

And in the same poem Mr. Bridges has quotations from German and Greek. Of course the poem is simply an exhibition piece to show the possibilities of the meter.

Let us now see the great difference between

verse of that character and accentual verse. We can best exhibit this through a longer quotation from "London Snow":

When men were all asleep the snow came flying,
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,
Stealthily and perpetually falling and loosely lying,
Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;
Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing;
Lazily and incessantly floating down and down:
Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and railing;
Hiding difference, making unevenness even,
Into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing....

In each of the above lines there are five accents, and they are all speech accents — that is to say, if we read the lines for the sense, putting the accents where they come in a prose reading, we are given the intended rhythm of the verse. But a mere succession of accents in a line will not make verse. In the appendix to his "Milton's Prosody," Mr. Bridges gives the rules which must be followed if accentual verse is to be successful. They depend on the fact that we speak in

little spurts of syllables grouped around a main accent. To take the example which Mr. Bridges uses to exemplify his rules: when Bishop Heber wrote his well-known hymn, beginning:

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid . . .

he himself would, following the conventional English prosody derived from the Greek, have said that he was writing in dactyls, the dactyl being a foot with a long syllable followed by two shorts:

Brightest and/best of the/sons of the/morning

(the last foot being a trochee — a long followed by a short)

Dawn on our/darkness and/lend us thine/aid

(where the last foot is a truncated trochee, its short syllable being dropped).

But as Mr. Bridges points out, "dawn on our" and "lend us thine" are very bad dactyls, even if we regard them as being "accentual" instead of "quantitative" — for in this orthodox prosody it is assumed that English accent is the modern substitute for Greek quantity. And in any event, we do not read the hymn in those groups: they

are artificial cuttings across the real rhythm. As we read those lines naturally, Mr. Bridges points out, we divide them as follows (I omit his marks over the long and short unstressed syllables):

Brîghtest/and bêst/of the sôns/of the môrning
Dâwn on/our dârkness/and lênd us/thine âid

Each of those stresses naturally attracts to it the grammatically subordinate syllables. Mr. Bridges gives the following laws of such attraction:

I. The stress governs the rhythm. This law is often disobeyed by poets who try to imitate the Greek or Latin hexameter and in order to make their English stresses correspond with the beat of the original meter use purely conventional accents; thus in Arthur Clough's "The Bothie of Tobie na Vuolich":

It was the/after/noon and the/sports were/now
at the/ending

But here a stress is manufactured, "It" in order to make the rhythm. And so a second law is formulated:

II. The stresses must all be true speech-stresses. In a later line of the same poem the

fault may be amended by redistributing the stresses. Clough would have scanned it:

And she got/up from her/seat on the/rock putting/by her/knitting.

But we do not read it that way, and if we did it would be a very bad line. When we read it naturally it is none too good but it does pass:

And she got / up / from her seat / on the rock / putting by / her knitting.

III. A stress has more carrying power over the syllable next to it, than it has over a syllable removed from it by an intervening syllable.

But on the other hand:

IV. A stress has a particularly strong attraction toward verbal unity and for its own proclitics and enclitics. (The last are simply such words as "of" etc., closely related to a more important word.)

These two laws simply mean that on the basis of phonetics alone we might read:

Brightest/and best of/the sons of/the morning

because each stressed syllable there will naturally attract to it the contiguous syllables; but that

the grammatical pull will cause us to modify that tendency and read the line with the enclitics and proclitics clinging each to the big word to which it is related, which gives us:

Brightest/and best/of the sons/of the morning.

In the second line quoted from Heber we saw that under ordinary scansion "Dawn on our" was a dactyl. But "our" is too heavy a syllable to be carried on the same impulse with "Dawn on" and so Mr. Bridges divides the line as above and gives us this further law:

V. A stress will not carry a heavy syllable which is removed from it by another syllable; or thus, a heavy syllable must be contiguous with the stressed syllable that carries it. And Mr. Bridges quotes a line from Shelley's "Sensitive Plant" that illustrates a breach of this law:

Each and all/like ministering/angels/were.

You will find that rule violated in nearly every poet, and indeed the lightness or heaviness of syllables depends so much on their articulation or even their context that it is sometimes hard to decide whether the rule has really been broken. Only a sensitive ear, indeed, would feel that the

"each" in the above line was too heavy to be attracted to the "all" and with an "and" between them. Perhaps an even more sensitive ear would be presumed if one objected to Conrad Aiken's

Like the ghost/of a music/we have some/where heard/.

Let the reader try this experiment. Substitute "As" for like in the above line, read it aloud and see if you prefer it.

VI. A stress will not carry more than one heavy syllable or two light syllables on the same side of it.

VII. In some meters when four, and in any meter when more than four, unstressed syllables occur together, they will occupy the place of a stress, which may be said to be distributed over them; and a line in which such a collection of syllables occurs will lack one of its stresses.

Mr. Bridges does not give any examples of this, but possibly this line from "London Snow" exhibits a case — for unless we unduly accent the "un" in unaccustomed, we have only four speech accents in the line:

And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed brightness

— the omitted stress being distributed over the syllables: for, the, un, ac.

I think there can be no doubt that those rules are good as far as they go. Obedience to them makes verse smooth and their violation is easily detected by the trained ear.

But Mr. Bridges would have poets write either in one mode or the other, syllabic or accentual, and with the exception of himself no English poet has ever succeeded in doing this. Mr. Bridges' work as a prosodist has been of inestimable value because he has taught the poets who have read him that English verse is not an imitation, with accent substituted for quantity, of Greek verse. And he has taught them that the rhythmical beauties of English verse are really a selection from and a heightening, through the verse form, of the rhythmical beauties of the English language generally. In the past the would-be poet who had learned a little in school about iambics and trochees and anapests, tried to write verse by piecing syllables together in such patterns — a sort of marquetry in words. And the result was, of course, doggerel. All good poetry is, on the contrary, based on honest speech structure — as indeed no one has exemplified in his work better than Mr. Bridges.

The point which, it seems to me, he has over-

looked, is one that was first explicitly made by the late Adelaide Crapsey in that posthumous and unfinished book, "A Study in English Metrics." It is that in verse structure we have not one element but three. Two of them belong to the verse-form: its actual rhythmic arrangement is the first; the syllabic arrangement by which that rhythm is exteriorized is the second. The third element is the phonetic speech arrangement that the poet utilized and this, especially the character of his vocabulary as regarded the proportions of monosyllables, dissyllables and polysyllables, was the theme of Miss Crapsey's work.

The other two factors have most clearly been recognized by Lascelles Abercrombie, the English poet, in his book "Principles of English Prosody."

The first of these factors Mr. Abercrombie calls the base and the second of them the modulation. The earliest blank-verse writers kept pretty close to their rule of ten syllables to a line with alternate syllables accented. We get this sort of thing:

Yield not, O king, so much to weak despair,
Your sons yet live, and long I trust they shall . . .

where every accent falls pat in the right place. But soon the basis of the rhythm had grown so familiar that when the poetry was read that rhythm beat in the inner ear — and so insistently that the outer ear did not need the reiteration of the accent. Liberties could be taken. The first accent of the line could be transposed to the first syllable (making the first foot, in classical language, a trochee instead of an iamb):

Fair is too foul an epithet for thee.

Within the next half century Milton was beginning a line with two trochees:

Universal reproach, far worse to bear.

And Shakespeare, gradually working free of the syllabic rules had written lines in which some of the feet were monosyllabic:

Is goads/thorns/nettles/tails/of wasps.

By the time we get to Mr. Yeats we have, but with the base still there and acting as a sort of background which throws into especial prominence the free rhythm, such lines as these from "Shadowy Waters":

How shall I name you, immortal, mild, proud shadows?

I only know that all we know comes from you,
And that you come from Eden on flying feet.
Is Eden far away, or do you hide
From human thought, as hares and mice and coneys
That run before the reaping hook and lie
In the last ridge of the barley? Do our woods
And winds and ponds cover more quiet woods,
More shining winds, more star-glimmering ponds?

When we comprehend that all English verse is free in the sense that its accents do not have to follow in rigid regularity and it does not have to count its syllables, but that it is verse because that freedom is accompanied by a reference to a fixed though ideal scheme, most of our prosodic difficulties vanish — and any desire we may have to write "free verse" will vanish too. That in their understanding of this freedom the poets are centuries ahead of the professors is a pity, but it is true. For instance, some few years ago Professor A. Koszul edited "Proserpine and Midas," Mary Shelley's two poetic plays for which Shelley wrote the lyrics. (It was, by the way, their first publication!) Mrs. Shelley's verse is quite orthodox in structure, but Mr. Koszul is worried because two of Mrs. Shelley's lines will

not scan. After the lines is a footnote: "A syllable here, a whole foot in the previous line, appear to be missing." It is true that, on the basis of strict syllable counting, they do not occur. It may have been carelessness on Mrs. Shelley's part, or she may have been writing by ear and wished us to scan the lines as follows:

Wear/thou/the marks/of what/thou art,
Let Pan/himself/blush/at such/a judge.

The monosyllabic feet of the first line do give the deliberation with which such a remark might be made. And the one monosyllabic foot in the second line is good and undoubtedly intentional.

Lyrical poetry, of course, we can never hope to scan unless we allow the poet the liberty of his variations. Any poem which was actually a series of unvaried iambics, anapests, or what not, would be intolerably monotonous. And any poem which led us to distort pronunciation or wrongly accentuate words in order to read it metrically would be a perversion of the language. What every poet utilizes is the natural speech rhythm of the English language. But in order to bring out its beauty, to force us to dwell on the right syllables so that we shall read as he intended

us to, he backs this variable phrase cadence against an ideal scale. But he does not himself think in terms of the meter first and then find words to suit it; only a writer of Christmas card verses does that.

Here, for instance, is the same phrase fitted to two metrical patterns: the first its original use by the poet who wrote it — as part of a mid-stress or "brittanic" pattern; the latter term invented by Robert Bridges as being itself an example of the pattern and a more appropriate term for English meter than the classical term which is amphibrach:

How háppy/could Í be/with éither
Were t'óther/dear chármer/áway.

And the other — which I invent on the spur of the moment:

How hap/py could/I be/with either.
But I/alas/am loved/by neither.

What has happened in the history of English poetry is that the natural rhythms of the language have suggested certain "bases" upon which more and more complex rhythms have been counterpointed as the ears of poets and readers

became accustomed to them. As the base became better established greater and greater liberties could be taken in modulating the rhythm.

This progress in blank verse, whose base is the rising two syllable foot, we have already seen. In the other duple foot, the falling or trochaic, a comparable liberty was not possible because when any freedom is used here the words, by the natural tendency of the language, rearrange themselves in a rising rhythm. Consequently trochaic lines — to use the classical term — are used as a variation but seldom through whole poems. Indeed Browning went so far as to aver that he had only once written a trochaic poem — in "One Word More" addressed to Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last time.

The same thing applies to triple measures — three syllables to each foot. The anapestic movement is again natural to the language:

I have found/out a gift/for my fair
I have found/where the wood/pigeons breed.

The above is a triple rising movement and the corresponding movement, a dactylic one, would be a triple falling one:

Áfter the/pángs of a/désperate/lover,
Whén day and/night I have/sighed all in/váin

But what usually happens is that the natural attachment of the less important syllables to the stressed syllables asserts itself over the imposed dactylic movement and the lines read as anapests. Kingsley, for instance, in "Andromeda" tried to write hexameters — and Saintsbury remarks that they are very successful ones as English hexameters go — but the genius of the language asserts itself, and what was doubtless meant to scan:

Fálls from the/sky like a/stár while the/wind
rattles/hoárse in his/pínions

really reads:

Fálls/from the sky/like a stár,/while the wind/
rattles hoárse/in his pín/ions.

Again a great deal of English verse, which used to be scanned as anapestic or as a mixture

of anapests and iambs, is really britannic — with the stress in the middle of each foot: Browning has an example in which the rhythm has an "onomatopœic" value: it reproduces the sound of galloping. It is "How they Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix":

I sprang to / the stirrup, / and Joris / and he;
I galloped, / Dirck galloped, / we galloped / all three;
"Good speed!" / cried the watch, / as the gate-bolts / undrew;
"Speed!" echoed / the wall to us / galloping / through.
Behind shut / the postern, / the lights sank / to rest
And into / the midnight / we galloped / abreast.

Of course the movement is varied — it is not all in mid-stress units for that would reduce it to a caricature. But the mid-stress movement dominates the poem.

Another basic pattern that is often used in light verse is the four syllable foot:

When the / enterprising / burglar's not a / burgling.

In classical prosody there were four types of "pæon" as the four-syllable foot was called, distinguished by the positions of the accented syllable which might be the first, second, third or fourth. And different sorts of pæonic movements have been reproduced by English poets in serious verse. But in any sequence of four syllables in English there is sure to be not only the main accent but a secondary accent and this tends to break the movement up into a dissyllabic one:

In the morning,/O so early/my beloved/my beloved.

But in all these movements it is necessary to remember that the actual rhythm of the verse is elastic and follows natural cadences. And the question arises, how far may the poet go in this freedom? The answer is, first, that he may go further in a simple and thoroughly known meter like that of blank verse, than in a longer and less known meter: and, secondly, the limit to which he may go is set by the fact that at a certain point his words will no longer suggest the base he has chosen but will suggest an altogether different one. For instance, blank verse is so well known that Robert Bridges can safely write:

Mighty/Deme/ter, Moth/er of/the seasons,
Bounti/ful all-/sustain/er, fair/est daughter . . .

But if we were unfamiliar with the meter we might begin to read the poem:

Mighty Dem/eter,/Mother of the /seasons. . . .

But during the decadence that overtook blank verse after Shakespeare had taught people to write it conversationally, the liberty proper to the meter was exceeded. Walter Raleigh gives this example in his "Milton." It comes from a comedy, "The City Match," by Jasper Mayne; and is a description of a Puritan sewing woman who embroiders religious emblems on all the garments she makes — much to the annoyance of the man who has to wear them:

My smock-sleeves have such holy embroideries,
And are so learned, that I fear in time
All my apparel will be quoted by
Some pure instructor. Yesterday I went
To see a lady that has a parrot. My woman
While I was in discourse converted the fowl;
And now it can speak naught but Knox's words;
So there's a parrot lost.

The two lines not *italicized* Raleigh objects to. Our tendency is to read the first as a six foot line. To read it as blank verse is to crowd the syllables, while the other line might tempt a careless reader to scan it:

While I/was in dis/course convert/ed the fowl

which taken alone would be a very good line of comic verse — but which is quite out of keeping with the metrical context. However if we remember that the beat comes on the second syllable of discourse we do not have any serious trouble:

While I/was in/discourse/converted/the fowl.

Indeed there are many worse lines in Byron from whom Abercrombie in his "The Theory of Poetry" quotes the following as lines where "the pattern has ceased to exist":

Unless you keep company
With him (and you seem scarce used to such high
Society) you can't tell how he approaches;

In the one case the verse is bad because it suggests a wrong pattern; in the other because it suggests no pattern.

Failure to recognize that all English verse except purely accentual verse is based on a fixed metrical convention but is not itself fixed is responsible for many weird attempts to force it into preconceived molds. Some musical scansionists will even pretend to give you the exact time values of every syllable or pause in a given line. But as no two of them ever seem to give the same time values, the innocent reader need not think himself lacking in an ear for verse if he cannot follow them. Theoretically the musical scansionists seem to have a strong case. It sounds reasonable to define rhythm in terms of equal time value; in music it is necessary so to define it for the sake of a consistent notation. But as a matter of fact the rhythm of spoken words is only in part a rhythm in time, it is also a rhythm of muscular effort. And this is the reason for the obvious fact that in verse a very heavy syllable will carry more light syllables in its train than a lighter one.

One of Walter de la Mare's most beautiful poems has had the misfortune to be scanned by two musical prosodists, and I shall quote a section in order to show how metrical poetry is based on a pattern but is free in cadence, at the same time showing how the musical scansionists at-

tempt to deal with it. The poem is "The Listeners."

"Is there anybody there?" said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses,
Of the forest's ferny floor:
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
Above the Traveller's head:
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
"Is there anybody there?" he said.

Mr. R. L. Mégroz, the author of "Walter de la Mare: A Biographical and Critical Study," tells us that this poem is in triple time and that both long and short lines are of three feet. He scans the third line thus:

And his: hórse in the silence/chámped/the grasses. . . .

The colon after "And his" means that those words are an anacrusis — that they do not count in the scansion, which must begin on an accented syllable. "Horse in the silence" is of course an impossible foot. But Mr. Mégroz may have had misgivings, for in the appendix he gives an alternative scansion, by another musical prosodist, Dr. William Thompson, author of what is probably the largest work on prosody in the

world, "The Rhythm of Speech." Mr. Thompson goes Mr. Mégroz one better and tells us that "its odd lines being vers libre fitly attuned to its even lines, which are a well-known three accent type, slightly modified." "Vers libre" for the long lines of what is admittedly one of the most rhythmically beautiful poems in the English language!

As a matter of fact the poem is free in a sense, but it is free in reference to a simple fixed pattern. The short lines do have three stresses each and the long lines have not three but four. Only, and this is what seems to have befogged the issue for Mr. Mégroz, Mr. de la Mare has sometimes filled out his fourth stress, sometimes left it to be assumed:

"Is there any/body there?" / said the Trav/eller
Knocking / on the moon/lit door
And his horse, / in the silence / champed / the grasses
Of the for/est's ferny/floor:
And a bird / flew up out / of the turret
Above/the Travel/er's head:
And he smote / upon the door / again a sec/ond time;
"Is there any/body there?" / he said.

To show that four stresses are necessary for the long lines — though as in "Traveller" the stress may be, so to speak, an assumption — I shall quote one or two of those lines which appear later in the poem:

Stood waiting in the quiet of the moonlight
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still
house.

That line is a particularly good example, for if, with Mr. Mégroz, we read it:

Fell: echoing through the/shadowiness of the
still / house

we not only ruin the line generally but we put the wrong emphasis on "still" as if we said "still HOUSE." On the other hand if we try to give "still" more emphasis than "house" — as Dr. Thompson seems to do — we wrong the character of the building: it did not contain a still. The only thing we can do if we read the line properly is to accent both "still" and "house."

With that I leave the question of poetic meter. I may seem to have paid disproportionate attention to it, but it is surprising how few people, relatively speaking, are able to read any verse

except the simplest. I have heard a writer of light verse confess that the poetry of Robert Bridges did not sound metrical to him, and even so informed a person as Alfred Kreymborg, in a critical work on American poets, says that Robert Frost writes narratives in "free blank verse" — which has an unfortunate connotation with the free verse that others have accused Mr. Frost of writing. As a matter of fact his blank verse is no more licentiate than that of Mr. Yeats or Mr. Abercrombie, and it is certainly not free in the sense of breaking the blank verse pattern.

Of the stanza I need say little. Every length of line from one foot to eight or nine has been successfully used and every number of lines from two to eight or nine (the last the Spenserian stanza) is in common use. Even longer stanzas are met with. The best account of the differing stanza forms with their rhyme schemes will be found in the late Raymond M. Alden's two books, "English Verse" and "Introduction to Poetry."

Rhyme has been a friend to the poet who has mastered it, treacherous to the poetaster. An early English critic remarked:

Rhymes the rudders are of verses
By which, like ships, they steer their courses.

And to Milton, at least by the time he had got ready to write "Paradise Lost," rhyme was "the Invention of a Barbarous Age, to set off wretched matter and lame Meeter; grac'd indeed since by the use of some famous modern Poets, carried away by Custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse then else they would have exprest them."

It is true that if the need for a rhyme causes a poet to say other than he intended, it is a debit. There is also truth in Milton's contention that "rime" is used in modern poetry because current prosody is not so rich as that of the Greeks — with their utilization of quantity as a metrical factor. Rhyme is an aid but often an adventitious one. And in long poems it is a nuisance. Indeed Robert Bridges, who more or less agrees with Milton — although he himself uses rhyme — remarks that "Rime is so trammeling, its effects so cloying, and its worthiest resources are so quickly exhausted, and often of such conspicuous artificiality, that a Prosody which was good enough to do without it would immediately discard it, in spite of its almost unparalleled achievements." ("A Letter to a Musician on English Prosody.")

However, in that last sentence, Mr. Bridges

seems almost to relent. And there is good, too, to be said for rhyme. Not only does it serve in a more or less mechanical way to mark off line endings, but it may be used expressly and for sense emphasis. When Pope uses rhyme it really functions:

Let Sporus tremble! — What? that thing of silk,
Sporus, that mere white curd of asses' milk?
Satire or sense, alas! can Sporus feel?
Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?
— Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,
This painted child of dirt, that stinks and stings;
Whose buzz the witty and the fair annoys,
Yet wit ne'er tastes, and beauty ne'er enjoys:
So well-bred spaniels civilly delight
In mumbling of the game they dare not bite. . . .

On the other hand rhyme may be used for purely decorative purposes as in Keats' "Endymion":

A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and
quiet breathing.

Professor Charlton Lewis in his "The Principles of English Verse" tried the experiment of rewriting the first few lines of that poem in such a way as to obliterate the rhyme, and the poem did not materially suffer. For Pope, on the other hand, the rhyme was a vital necessity.

As an aid to the major rhythm of the poem, an expected recurrence making a pattern, rhyme of course has a function, and it is quite possible that the beauty of Collins' unrhymed "Ode to Evening" depends on the fact that we would normally expect rhyme and so at the end of each line we are given a slight surprise:

If aught of oaten stop or pastoral song,
May hope, chaste eve, to soothe thy modest ear,
Like thy own solemn springs,
Thy springs and dying gales,

O nymph reserved, while now the bright-haired
SHVI
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,
With brede ethereal wove,
O'erhang his wavy bed: . . .

The absence of rhyme is compensated for by a particularly rich melodic quality.

Even where rhyme is needed, however, the limitations of its resources are felt and will be

increasingly felt as rhymes become hackneyed by repetition. Modern poets have used three ways to get out of this difficulty. One is assonance, where the vowel sounds of the terminal words rhyme but not the consonants. Here are four lines from a "sonnet in assonance" by Wilfrid Scawen Blunt:

A thousand bluebells blossom in the wood,
Shut in a tangled brake of briar roses,
And guarded well from every wanton foot,
A treasure by no eye of man beholden. . . .

Or the consonant sounds of the terminal words may be rhymed but not the vowel sounds. This is called consonance and was used to very fine effect by one of the English war poets, Wilfrid Owen. Here is the beginning of "Strange Meeting" from his "Poems":

It seemed that out of the battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which Titanic wars had groined,
Yet alas there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one stood up and stared. . . .

Many poets who do not use these devices systematically do give us imperfect rhymes instead of perfect, often with very beautiful effect. Walter de la Mare does it exquisitely, and curiously enough Amy Lowell — apostle of poetic freedom — scolded him in a review for one of his most beautiful effects, at the end of "The Sunken Garden" — a garden in which there is a statue of lead.

While, unmoved, to watch and ward,
'Mid its gloom'd and daisied sward,
Stands with bowed and dewy head
That one little leaden lad.

It was a pity, said Miss Lowell, that he should give us the imperfect rhyme when the perfect rhyme — head and lead — was right to his hand. Fortunately, however, Mr. de la Mare does not make a practice of doing the obvious thing.

The third way out of the dilemma of the need and the poverty of rhyme has been suggested by an English poet, Frank Kendon, in a note in his "Poems and Sonnets" where he uses the device. He calls it analyzed rhyme. A true rhyming termination is made up of both the vowel and the consonant sounds. Suppose in one word a vowel and a consonant sound, *a* and *b*, and in

another word which rhymes with it, *c* and *d*. An ordinary rhyme would then be, *ab* at the end of the first line and *cd* at the end of the second. Mr. Kendon shuffles them, and makes his two terminal sounds, *ad* and *bc*. Thus:

I seek my days vainly,
Not in delight;
Though the world is elate,
And tastes her joys finely.

And he finds that this is sufficiently near to the effect of rhyme so that it can be used in sonnets in conjunction with ordinary rhyme without disturbing the pattern.

Rhyme may also be used internally in the line — increasing its apparent speed or making it really two lines. But this brings us to the general question of music within the line. Much has been written on rhyme, much more on meter, but very little has been written on the elements that make verse melodious. The reason is, of course, that rhyme and meter can be codified but melody cannot. It is altogether too elusive. Even what has been written seems artificial and only true within narrow limits. The most obvious element in verbal melody is of course the scale of differing pitches given by the vowels; another element is the character of the differing conso-

nant groups — liquids, gutturals, dentals, sibilants. And the ease with which a line is uttered also depends on the juxtaposition of words in such a manner that the voice makes an easy transition from one word to another — though that is a matter of pace rather than of melody.

I have already given some examples of this aspect of poetic technique in "How to Criticize Books." Here I shall only add one other, a poem by Edmund Blunden in which alliteration is very beautifully used; indeed if we traced out not only the alliterations but the internally rhyming vowel sounds we should find a very complex pattern. The poem is "Strange Perspective" from "English Poems":

Happy the herd that in the heat of summer
Wades in the waters where the willows cool them.
From murmuring midday that singes the meadow,
And turns very tansies, fire-flowers, tindery.
Naked at noon there, naughtiness too wantons,
From bank bold jumping, and bough down dandling,
Of chimed hour chainless and churlish duty.
I see the glad set, who am far off sentenced,
Their lily limbs dazzle over long dry pastures,

And rude though ridges are risen between us,
Miles of mountains morosely upthrusting,
And dim and downward my gaze now droops,
My pool beyond pasture by a strange perspective
Is plain, and plunging its playmates gleam,
Hustling the staid herd into hazardous shadows.

Verse melody undoubtedly gives emotional tone to poetry, but to what extent can it be made to give it definitely? Can the emotional tone of the verse melody be made to blend with the intellectual meaning of the words?

A. E. has broached the question in an essay on "The Language of the Gods" in "The Candle of Vision" but unfortunately he does so on occult principles and without particular application to poetry. His letter to the *London Times Literary Supplement* of May 19, 1921, at least opens the subject of the conscious use of sound in poetry. The late Professor Tolman tried to systematize the emotional meanings of the vowel sounds on the basis of analyzing their actual occurrence. He thought that as the vowel scale deepened from the short "i," as in little, through the "e" and "a" sounds to the sounds of wood, gloom, awe, the emotional suggestiveness ranged from emotions of joy, delight, gayety, frivolity and the suggestiveness of physical

littleness to horror, solemnity, gloom, oppressiveness.

If nothing else entered into the proposition this might be true. The word gloom does seem *a priori* to express the feeling of gloom. But in this respect sense will always override sound. And when we hear:

The flowers that bloom in the spring, tra la,

the "oo" sound certainly does not interfere with the mood of the line.

The direct representation through sound or meters or both, of emotions or even physical situations, is very commonly met with in poetry. It is somewhat comparable to program music, and may be done obviously and clumsily or so subtly that we are hardly aware of its workings. Here is an example, from the poetry of the late Father Gerard Hopkins, "Inversnaid" — a poem in which the sound echoes two sounds of a brook, when it is turbulent and, in the last line of the first stanza and in the last stanza, when it runs smoothly:

This darksome burn, horseback brown,
His rollrock highroad roaring down,

In coop and in comb the fleece of his foam
Flutes and low to the lake falls home.

A windpuff bonnet of fáwn-fróth
Turns and twindles over the broth
Of a pool so pitchblack, féll-frówning,
It rounds and rounds Despair to drowning.

Degged with dew, dappled with dew
Are the groins of the braes that the brook
threads through,
Wiry heathpacks, flitches of fern,
And the beadbonny ash that sits over the
burn.

What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.

How meter may be used onomatopœically is beautifully shown in a poem from "The Waggoner and Other Poems" by Edmund Blunden. He has described in short lines a mill-pond in which there are many smaller fish and a pike. Evening approaches and the pike grows hungry.

From the shorter line the poet goes into hexameter — the meter that best expresses action:

Sudden the gray pike changes, and quivering poises for slaughter;
Intense terror wakens around him, the shoals scud awry, but there chances
A chub unsuspecting; the prowling fins quicken, in fury he lances;
And the miller that opens the hatch stands amazed at the whirl in the water.

The hexameter begins with a dactyl — a foot accented on the first syllable. Note that in the second and third lines quoted the poet precedes this first accented syllable by one light syllable. And in the fourth line — when the tragedy is over and only a swirl remains to indicate that something has happened — he begins his line with two unaccented syllables which lead up to the first accented syllable, making the three into an anapest, so that the whole movement of the line is reversed and for the rushing dactylic measure we have the quiet anapest:

And the miller that opens the hatch / stands amazed / at the whirl / in the water.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Science and Philosophy

If we lived in the sort of world which some people have imagined — in a world of personal spirits with whom we could communicate soul to soul directly — we should need no science and perhaps no philosophy. Indeed the first at least would be impossible; its data would be lacking. On the other hand if we were what the extreme behaviorists have told us we are — predestined machines running our appointed course, again we should have neither for we should have no consciousness; it would be superfluous and a luxury and hence would never have arisen in the evolutionary process.

As it is, each one of us seems to himself to be a person and he appears to communicate with other persons. But he seems also to be living in a world of material bodies. The other persons are oftener than not treated as material bodies — used for this and that purpose. And when we reflect upon the means by which we communi-

cate with other persons we find that they are very indirect and roundabout. In such a world science arises because we need a technique for dealing with material things and philosophy arises because we are puzzled by the apparent (and it may be real) dualism consisting of persons, each one of whom feels that he has attributes like "free will" and of the mechanical world in which these persons are enmeshed.

No intelligent person, then, can avoid wondering just what he is and what his place in the universe is. As far as science goes it does not tell us so much as we might imagine about our place in the universe: it does tell us a lot about the universe regarded as a machine, with the human element abstracted and put on one side. But we ought to read science nonetheless both for the relation which it has with philosophy and for more mundane reasons. A great many people who have had an old-fashioned classical education are still so ignorant, not only of the facts of science but of the scientific method, that they might just as well be living in the thirteenth century. They are, for the most part, well off, and it is a good thing, for otherwise they could hardly survive in the modern world. As it is they live in a sort of dream, cut off from great segments of intelligent participation

in life. They ride in cars whose mechanism they do not understand, they use electric light and know nothing of electricity, they eat but know nothing of physiology, and when they are ill they are more likely to go to a quack or use some up-to-date variant of primitive therapeutic magic, than they are to go to a physician. They know nothing about economics and as often as not they lose their financial independence by wild-cat investments. Being equally ignorant of political science they let scoundrels govern them and obediently react to the silliest catchwords. Not only is "the unexamined life not worth living" but it does not pay financially to live it.

However, reading scientific books for utilitarian purposes I shall assume to be the reader's own business, and so proceed to the question of reading such books for what may more properly be called cultural purposes. As we all know, there have been extraordinary changes in scientific ideas in the last twenty years. Physics has become transformed and all the other sciences have been affected. The sort of science which reduced the world to a machine all of whose laws would one day be determined — so that, theoretically, everything in the universe would be as predictable as an eclipse — is apparently dead. Certainly the Newtonian physics is dead.

It makes tough sledding for the general reader, but fortunately there are a few living scientists with a gift for exposition, and they are coming to our rescue. Sir James Jeans' "The Universe Around Us," and A. S. Eddington's "The Nature of the Physical World" are the two books that at the present moment will give us the best picture of the physical world as the scientist is trying to chart it out, with his rulers gently bent by Herr Einstein so that they no longer measure straight lines. Of these two books Jeans' is the easier reading, but Eddington's carries the story further along and into the realm of philosophy. The reader who finds both of them beyond him should get a list of the books in the "Today and Tomorrow Series" (Dutton) and in "The New Science Series" (Norton). These two series between them cover all those fields in which our ideas are changing — not only in physical science but in sociology and philosophy. And each book is written by an expert in his field.

That point is important. For if you cannot read about these changes in the original sources, you should get as close to those sources as you can. Shun the "outline of" and the "story of." They are debased intellectual currency written by amateurs too often, or hurriedly written by people who may know their subject but who in

"writing down to" a large audience nearly always falsify when they do not mystify. I have more than once read popularizations of philosophers whom I had read at first hand and more or less understood, and the popularized version of them I simply could not understand at all in many places, and where I could understand it I found it often to be but a caricature of the original doctrine.

Of course the popularization of philosophy is worse than the popularization of science — for in science the objective facts act as a check-up. But in philosophy there are none. For whether he knew it or not every philosopher's world-vision is the expression of a point of view. It is interesting to note the open confession of this in the works of so "scientific" and "realistic" a philosopher as Bertrand Russell. The job of representing in proportion, with accuracy, and with a comprehension of the spirit of the thing, another man's philosophy is a job for one of that man's peers, and even then there is bound to be some distortion.

Fortunately a great deal of modern philosophy can be read in the original versions and with understanding, and I shall proceed to give a sort of map of the contemporary field that the reader may see how one philosopher is related to another

and where the main issues are being fought. First as to the word. When we look at it, it apparently means love of wisdom, and is often used just in that sense: as a love of something that is more than knowledge, that includes sweetness and reasonableness, and that arms us against the ills of the world. And in that sense philosophy is the first weapon we need in the struggle of life. It overcomes evil by explaining it and fortifying us against it. However, some one whose name I do not recall qualifies that assertion by saying that the evil which philosophy can explain — by seeing it in perspective — is past evil. The evil against which it fortifies us is future evil. In the case of present evil there is no application — the only way to combat present evil is to "do something about it."

But the word is also used in a more technical sense, either as a synthesis of all the sciences, or as a reasoned account of man's destiny in the universe, or as the activity which subjects to criticism the findings both of science and of gross experience.

In order to understand modern philosophy in that sense one should know something at least of the Greek philosophy whence it springs. There are so many histories of Greek philosophy that I hesitate about recommending any one

volume, suggesting instead a book which covers both Greek and modern philosophy; a book which is perhaps the best one-volume work showing the evolution of man's thinking and showing it not as a mere growth of warring, competing and triumphing concepts, but as a process tied up all along the way with the social process. The book is "The Adventure of Human Thought: The Major Traditions of European Philosophy," by George Boas (Harper). The philosophy of the past is also being dealt with in a most interesting manner in a series of books which cover the major philosophers individually. "Leaders of Philosophy," edited by Professor J. L. Stocks (Little, Brown), was initiated with "Leibniz," by Herbert Wildon Carr, and "Spinoza," by Leon Roth. A volume on Kant is in preparation as I write.

Coming to the present day the general reader will find a very different situation from the older days in which, at times, one philosophy held the world for a period, or two clear-cut and opposing doctrines were in conflict. Contemporary philosophy has been described as a meeting of extremes and we find an idealist, Bosanquet, scolding another idealist, Croce, because he does not appear to believe in the full reality of the outer world and remarking for himself that he

would not object to being called a materialist if the people who called him that would only admit that matter is as rich a thing as he considers it.

But assuming that the reader is not himself conversant with such terms as idealism, let me briefly map out the present situation. There are to-day possibly three main camps — but with a degree of fraternization between them that would shock any one who has had the blessing of military training. Roughly speaking then, and beginning with the situation of a man viewing the world, we have three main positions. If the philosopher begins with the world, discovers chemical phenomena, biological phenomena, and lastly man as the end result of the evolutionary process, he is some sort of scientific materialist or naturalist or realist. In all those cases he puts Nature first and views man as a product and child of Nature.

If on the other hand, and in the same situation, the philosopher soliloquizes as follows: Here I am. I see a world, but I have no guarantee that it is real because I do not sense it immediately but through fallible "sense organs"; my eyes may deceive me and I have even caught them at it; all my ears can do is give me something I call sound — but it comes from sound-

less vibrations. I have heard that Dr. Johnson proved that material substance was real and hard by kicking a stone, but I can readily see that all he proved was that his mind could form an idea of hardness and resistance just as it can form ideas of colors and sounds — though we know that those things arise only within our minds. In short, my own mind I know directly; all else I infer.

If a philosopher soliloquizes in that way and takes his findings seriously, he will be some sort of idealist. If an extremist by nature he could conceivably be a solipsist — one who holds the belief that he himself is the sole existent. But no one yet has publicly declared himself to be that. If his inferences about the outer world go in one direction he will be a subjective idealist, following Bishop Berkeley — whose utterances were responsible for Dr. Johnson's ill-considered use of his leg to prove that the world existed by kicking part of it. If they go in another direction he will be an objective idealist, following the followers of Hegel — nobody to-day ever quite follows Hegel himself.

But there is a third road. If the philosopher begins not with the outer world and not with the inner world but with the undoubted fact that a person — a center of experience — is in

interaction with other persons and with an environment of "things," he is released at the outset from certain puzzles which his fellows are called upon to solve. The materialist must solve the puzzle of how a (by his hypothesis) mechanically driven system of Nature can give rise to conscious beings. The idealist must solve the puzzle of how spiritual individuals or else beings who are real by sharing a rational nature, can perceive — and therefore by hypothesis in a way create — a nature which is full of brute contingency, which hurts and even kills its creators.

The pragmatist or instrumentalist, not beginning with nature as scientifically conceived but as she appears to be, and not beginning with the isolated individual man, solipsistically considered, but with the man who is obviously a product of society, does not have to bring opposites together. To him the real is not the entire cosmos (officially, as an empiricist, he cannot even talk about the cosmos as a whole) or the individual (for there may be no such thing). The real is experience.

The best summary of the different idealist positions I know is "Idealism as a Philosophy" by Alfred R. A. Hoernle (Doubleday, Doran). For realistic philosophy the reader may be referred to the writings of Bertrand Russell and for realism

in connection with and contrast to other present day systems to "Philosophy by Way of the Sciences: An Introductory Text Book," by Ray H. Dotterer (Macmillan).

Pragmatism in its earlier forms may be studied in the extraordinarily vivid writings of the late William James. But lest the reader misunderstand James and take pragmatism to be the doctrine that any idea which "works" is true, and that we should believe not with our intellects but with our wills, he should follow James (or else omit James and begin with John Dewey). Professor Dewey has written a number of books on philosophy, psychology and education, but the two in which he gives most systematically his own version of pragmatism — which he calls instrumentalism — are "Experience and Nature" (Norton) and "The Quest for Certainty" (Minton, Balch).

These books will give you a line-up of the present situation. If you add to them "The New Universe," by Baker Brownell, and a series of small books, "Man and His World," edited by Baker Brownell (both published by Van Nostrand), you will have also a complete exhibit of the ways in which philosophy and science are affecting all our human values to-day.

But there are three or four books I would

especially recommend for their value in bringing philosophy in the more technical sense of the word into such living relation with the individual that it becomes philosophy in the wider and more human sense of the word. The author of three of these books is Professor Warner Fite of Princeton, and his special contribution to philosophy is the distinction between the world and the people therein as we may observe them and generalize about them, and life as we know it by living it: between the points of view, that is, of the observer and of the agent. I spoke above of pragmatism as a third way in philosophy, rejecting the extremes of idealism and of materialism alike. But pragmatism is really a philosophic method rather than a philosophy. And some of its proponents, as, for instance, Professor Dewey, use the method in such a way as to lead themselves toward realism and the recognition of Nature rather than the individual as the ultimate reality. Others, like F. C. S. Schiller, use the method to get rather away from the tyranny of Nature and to assert the reality of the individual.

I do not wish to classify Mr. Fite — and he has never called himself a pragmatist. But in his latest book, "The Living Mind: Essays on the Significance of Consciousness" (MacVeagh), you

will find some trenchant criticism of the realist, and you will find that his general point of view could best be called personalism or humanism — if the words were used without any implication that Mr. Fite is associated with any previous school using those labels.

Besides this book he has written "Individualism" and "Moral Philosophy," the latter being a further development and a restatement of ideas advanced in the first book. As the title of the last named book is rather forbidding I should say that Mr. Fite's moral philosophy is Socratic: "Know Thyself." To him the word morality does not mean behaving well and observing the neighbor's standards — or even Kant's standards — but simply being intelligent. All people of sensitive discrimination are at one time or another in their lives troubled by questions of destiny, duty, their place in the world. According to their lights they seek consolation anywhere from the Bible to the writings of Elbert Hubbard. But to such seekers as have rejected authority and who distrust the official moralists just because they are official I would recommend Warner Fite's "Moral Philosophy" as against any other book I know. Indeed he is almost the only professional philosopher I know who refuses to talk like a professional philosopher. He is like

an old Greek dialectician, making subtle and keen distinctions, but doing it in very beautiful language — and in a grove. For when you and your hearers are in a grove you do not do your talking from a platform.

Another individualist philosopher whose question is also "Where do I come in?" is the Spaniard, Miguel de Unamuno. His major work, "The Tragic Sense of Life" (Macmillan), his volume of essays, "Essays and Soliloquies" and his novel "Mist" (the last translated by Warner Fite) all address themselves from various angles to the question of the individual in relation not only to the world but to the accounts of the world given him by the philosophers. The poignancy of that relation was implied by Kant when he said that two things filled him with awe: the starry heavens without and the moral law within. For, in Mr. Fite's language, the starry heavens and the concomitant littleness of man are things discussed from the observer's standpoint. But the moral law within is in terms of the standpoint of the agent. And this is not without implications.

Philosophy then, taken as a sort of personal wisdom, as one's adjustment of self to the world or of the world to self, is more than a holding of this or that doctrine. It is rather an ordering

of one's life in the face of the great paradox hinted at above: of our feeling or prejudice or whatever you wish to call it, of the worth of the individual, in the face of the alien and remote stars.

CHAPTER NINE

First Editions and Best Editions

A BOOK that is worth reading is worth reading again. Indeed no book of any depth yields all at the first reading. And so the reader of books will wish to be a possessor of books. On what scale ought he to buy books and which editions of a given book ought he to buy?

As far as contemporary books go that question answers itself. But no sane person who reads at all is going to read only contemporary books. Unless, indeed, one says, what is true, that all the great works of the past are contemporary. And as a general rule I might say that you should buy twentieth century editions of the older books. For, unless you are a first edition collector, there will be little point in getting early editions, especially since early editions other than firsts are quite likely to be bad.

In this matter bookbuyers are to be found at two extremes and at an indeterminate middle point. On the one hand we have the collector

who wants a first edition of his favorite authors — and if Shakespeare is a favorite author he cannot always get a first edition. On the other hand there is the uncritical bookbuyer who is perfectly willing to have all of Shakespeare squeezed into a single volume printed in small type, two columns to a page and therefore not readable with comfort. In the indeterminate position is the bookbuyer who does not want a first edition, cannot abide a cheap reprint, and who says to his bookseller, "Get me a good reading edition of Spenser," of Crabbe, or whoever. The bookseller then gets him a well printed edition — usually a fairly early one; but often it is abominably edited.

One reason for this is that the earlier writers, say Chaucer, Spenser, Milton and Shakespeare, did not always spell as we do and did not always have the services of such good printers as the Rudge and Plimpton Presses of our own day. In addition they became obscure to later readers. And in consequence ingenious later editors began to emend their texts in various ways. It was a fascinating game and they played it well — too well. As a result, if one goes into a bookstore to-day, or if one procures a volume of Shakespeare from an advertisement in a paper, one is

possibly buying a pig in a poke. One may obtain an edition that has been "ironed out" by an unpoetic and pedantic editor. In its broad general outlines, of course, one edition of Shakespeare will be like another — but not in its detail. I have said that these editors did their work too well. Here is an example. Shakespeare's punctuation offended many of the early textual critics. It seemed anarchistic at times and they were led to explain this fact in terms of the illiteracy or drunkenness of Elizabethan compositors — and by the assumption that little or no proof reading was done on the plays.

But within the past few years it has been discovered that Shakespeare punctuated — in common with other poets of his day — on a system different from our own. Ours is a syntactical punctuation: the marks are guides to the grammar. In Shakespeare's usage the marks were sometimes a guide to the syntax but they were also used as a guide to the actor's elocution. A comma meant a little pause, a semicolon a longer pause and a period a very long pause. In the "New Cambridge Shakespeare" (Macmillan), edited by Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson, this punctuation, using leaders for the oratorical punctuation and the ordinary marks for the

grammatical punctuation, has been restored. As a result the plays are far easier to read. And the modern editors have discovered too that much of their conjectural emendation was gratuitous, and have come to believe that the "folios" are an authoritative edition of the text. In the beautiful (and limited) Nonesuch edition of Shakespeare the folios are reprinted with a minimum of change.

That these returns to the original edition are sometimes of vital importance to the full meaning of the poetry I shall show by two examples, one of them from as late a poet as Shelley. In the modern editions of Milton we are quite likely to read, in the passage in "Paradise Lost" in which Milton refers to his blindness:

But cloud in stead, and ever during dark
Surrounds me, from the chearful waies of men
Cut off, and for the Book of knowledge fair
Presented with a universal blank
Of Nature's works to mee expunged and ras'd,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.

This is perfectly intelligible. But Canon Beeching's edition, published just before the turn of the century, follows the original spell-

ing. Milton like Robert Bridges in our own day was a spelling reformer and innovator, and in the above passage when the word "me" came in an accented place in the verse he spelled it "mee" to show that it was "long" or accented. Furthermore the original word is not "blank" but "blanc." A quirk of Milton's spelling, we are likely to think, and let it go at that. But a still later editor of Milton, H. J. C. Grierson, did not let it go at that and he quotes a letter of Milton's which shows that when he spoke of a universal blanc — *blanc* being a French adaptation meaning whiteness — he meant just what he said. His blindness was not a total exclusion of light but — to quote him — "yet the darkness in which I am perpetually immersed seems always, both by night and day, to approach nearer to white than black."

However, some of Milton's spelling was not for metrical effect and was merely to us the ugly usage of his time. Mr. Grierson, whose edition is published in England by Chatto & Windus, has modernized the spelling where it was merely old-fashioned but kept Milton's where it was intended for purposes of emphasis — metrical emphasis or sense emphasis.

My other instance is a curious one of editorial

arrogance. In Shelley's "To a Skylark" we read — if we have a good edition:

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race
is just begun.

But when Rossetti edited an edition of Shelley's poems, he had a prosaic fit when he came to that stanza, and he argued that a skylark certainly was not an "unbodied" creature, only spooks were unbodied; so he changed the last line to read: "Like an embodied joy . . ." which, after all, is not quite so good as the original.

The question is of course more acute in poetry than it is in prose, but in prose too errors have crept in and new errors have been made by editors. So the reader of our older authors should never buy the first edition that he happens to come across. He should ask himself if the particular edition is a good text, who edited it, and whether it is edited for the general reader or for the scholar who is interested in textual variations. Our older writers used words and turns of phrase with which we are not familiar and

occasionally we need an explanation. An "unglossed" reprint of a Shakespeare folio would, for instance, be unintelligible in places to the average reader of to-day. On the other hand, the reader for pleasure will not be interested in all the minute differences of punctuation and spelling in early authors. He may like to refer to the Furness Variorum Shakespeare to solve some puzzling places in the text, but he would hardly want to read for continuity in those bristling and heavy volumes.

The rest of this chapter will consist of suggestions as to the best editions of the older authors, for the reader who is not making a special study but who is reading for pleasure.

The first suggestion is a general one. Never buy the older authors, and this applies not only to archaic authors but to men as recent as Balzac and Tolstoy, from houses that sell "sets" which are either unedited or present anonymous translations. One or two of the regular publishing houses do sell books by subscription and their books are authorized editions if the authors are contemporary, well edited books if they are not. But the house which works exclusively through agents or through the mails, and which offers you sets in "bindings" at high prices has, more likely than not, bought up old and worn plates of

out of date editions and is making a few hundred per cent profit on every sale.

If you wish to read Tolstoy, for instance, the authorized translation of his works by Aylmer Maude has just been issued in a uniform edition by the Oxford University Press. Mr. Maude knew Tolstoy and knows Russia and he has translated direct from the original. If you pick up any old edition of Tolstoy in English you are quite likely to get a translation made not from the Russian but from a French translation of the Russian — and you may well imagine that something was lost in the process.

The next suggestion is also general. If you want a representation of the English poets from the earliest until almost the present day consult the catalogue (which you will find bound with others in a large book in any good bookstore) of the Oxford University Press. If you wish the best and most inexpensive reading editions of the poets, you will find them, on ordinary or India paper in the low-priced reprints; and if you wish more ambitious editions, in large type — though for the most part the type is large in the cheaper ones except in the case of such voluminous poets as Shakespeare and Spenser — you will find them in the critical editions which record all changes of text and sometimes

have commentaries which help in the reading.

Now for a few specific suggestions. I have just mentioned Spenser. "The Faërie Queene" and the "Minor Poems" are published by the Oxford University Press in two volumes, with textual notes, the editing done by J. C. Smith and Ernest de Selincourt respectively. If you want all of Spenser in one volume, with a glossary — which the larger volumes do not have —and a general introduction which will give you the life of Spenser and point out the excellences of his verse, the Press gives you the same text as above with those additions in one volume — but the book is printed in two columns in rather small type. If, on the other hand, you are enough of a Spenser fan to want commentary, notes, and large type too, the Scholartis Press of London is now publishing a volume every few months, a definitive edition edited by Professor W. L. Renwick, which will be completed in seven volumes. It has not only an authoritative text but the commentary at the end of each volume, which includes a glossary, will give you all the aid necessary to bring out every point made in the poems.

But I should have begun with Chaucer, of course, since he is the first modern English poet. The only complete and low-priced editions that

I know of are the reprints of Skeat's edition. The Princeton University Press has recently published "Troilus and Criseyde," newly edited from all the known manuscripts by Professor R. K. Root. And a number of people at the University of Chicago are working on a definitive edition of all of Chaucer. But meanwhile for the general reader, Skeat — who has, incidentally, been reprinted in the Modern Library — will probably have to do for some time to come.

Of editions of Shakespeare I have already mentioned the "New Cambridge Edition." Another edition, just initiated by Houghton Mifflin Co., is edited by Professor Joseph Quincy Adams, and I should recommend one or the other. Mr. Adams also takes note of the new Shakespearian punctuation, and his is a slightly more convenient book to read than the other because he has put his glossary alongside the text. When you come to an unfamiliar word you do not have to turn to the back of the book. One side glance and you go on reading — hardly noticing the interruption. I do not recommend any of the editions containing all of the plays in one or in three volumes.

The one-volume editions are printed in a type too small for comfortable reading and the three-volume editions do not have sufficient

commentary. For Shakespeare's plays and poems do not yield their potential riches unless we know something about and around the play as well as the words of the play itself.

For Milton I recommend either the Oxford or the Chatto & Windus editions mentioned above. Of Pope and Dryden I do not believe — though I may be wrong — that there is a complete and satisfactory and well-printed edition available to-day. For other Elizabethan and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers you will find satisfactory editions especially those, if you wish to spend a little money, published by the Nonesuch and other modern semi-private presses. I see signs of a revival of interest in eighteenth-century work. Edith Sitwell is now writing a life of Pope and a good edition of his works is something that we may expect in the nature of things. Considering how we have praised some of our recent "realistic" poets it is a wonder to me that some one does not rediscover George Crabbe. The best edition of his works is one published in three volumes by the University of Cambridge Press, edited by A. W. Ward.

In buying the works of nineteenth-century poets there is one snag which you ought to look out for. You may be tempted by a one-volume

edition of the works, say, of Tennyson or Arnold. You may imagine that it is complete but upon examination you will find that it includes only the early poems which were out of copyright when the book was issued. And even in the case of earlier poets these books are dangerous. I once bought an edition of Gray, well printed and on India paper. The text was bad and part of one poem was printed as a part of another. The book was in a series published by George Newnes of London. I have seen other books in that series. In no case has there been any introduction or any evidence of editing or a note as to the text used.

If you wish to build up a library at a minimum of expense you should procure the catalogues of Everyman's Library, The Modern Library, The Modern Readers' Series (Macmillan), Bohn's Library (Harcourt, Brace & Co.), The Borzoi Pocket Classics (Alfred Knopf), and the series of popular reprints issued by Messrs. Houghton Mifflin and Messrs. Doubleday, Doran. Among those you will find almost everything you will want. And unlike the earlier enterprises in cheap reprints all these books are manufactured with regard to looks and durability.

Through some of these publishers and also through Messrs. Grosset & Dunlap there are

available too, for a dollar each, reprints from the original plates of all the more successful novels of the past decade. Thus the low-priced book goes all the way from novels still in copyright back to the very earliest books.

CHAPTER TEN

The Book as a Physical Object

ALTHOUGH at the present time psychologists are so divided into sects that the Clark University Press is publishing every five years a symposium called "Psychologies of ——," 1925 being the first year, they are for the most part agreed that there is no such division in the human animal as that of body and soul, or even body and mind. And all the evidence seems to support them. But any one wishing to contradict that after all rather new idea, could use the analogy of the book. For very obviously here is something which demonstrably has both soul and body, since its body is so to speak exchangeable.

When Conrad wrote "Lord Jim" its first body was the original manuscript — and a very valuable body it became, for if I remember rightly it sold for over one thousand dollars. But for us the book is embodied in the printed copy, and no matter how many copies are destroyed, the book as such is not hurt — as long as one remains.

However, just as in life we do not separate the soul from the body in our thought, but look to the body as a sort of revelation of the soul, and on the other hand, treat the body with respect as well as the soul, so in dealing with books we should always remember that the body is something more than a mere vehicle for the soul. We should treat it with respect if only as a symbol of our respect for the ideas it carries.

It is safe to say that most people, even people of intelligence (partial) do not do this. They turn down the corners of pages to mark the place; if the leaves are unopened they use their index finger as a paper cutter. They open a book with a violence that would be excessive if applied to a stuck window. A book that has been in their possession for a week looks as if it had been salvaged from the front line trenches in France.

On the very lowest grounds this is, of course, bad policy. For every one buys a number of books that after reading he decides not to keep. And a book that looks as if it had been through the war cannot, with self-respect, even be given to a hospital — to say nothing of the fact that it cannot be sold. The last may seem like a small consideration but it is not. Whenever you buy a new work by an American author or an English

first edition of a work by an English author you are buying something which, if its author is a writer with a future, is going to appreciate in price. We never know what author will be collected next, and if we happen to have, for instance, at the present time, the first English editions of H. G. Wells or John Galsworthy, we have something almost valuable enough to be called property. In 1912, the year of its publication, I bought a copy of "The Listeners," by Walter de la Mare, for which I paid a dollar. I liked the poems in that collection so well that I carried the book everywhere, read it and reread it, and incidentally knocked it about a good deal. At the present time that volume in first-class condition is worth fifty dollars, but I fear my copy would only rank as a "cripple."

But a book should be treated well not only because it is a potentially valuable article but because it is a thing of beauty — or ought to be. Because the first printed books were printed from types modeled on the hand lettering of the writers of manuscript books and by men who inherited their tradition of beautiful page proportions, they were extraordinarily beautiful productions which have never, indeed, been surpassed. As against all comers the Gutenberg Bible still holds its own. Then after a time print-

ing, here and there, became debased, but there were always revivals and there has always been a tradition of fine printing.

In the past these revivals have predominantly been of beautiful type faces replacing extreme or inartistic forms. But the revival which is in full swing to-day is rather different. We have now an armamentarium of types sufficient for every purpose. And we have brought our machine methods of composition — monotype or linotype — to a point where they are almost as fine as the finest hand setting. What is happening to-day is an unprecedented employment of the great masters of typography — men like Bruce Rogers and Frederic Warde to mention only two American masters — in the printing of fine books, and the taking of these fine books by the commercial publishers as models of what their commercial products should be. Not only is the general reader becoming "type conscious" but there are more collectors of finely printed books to-day than there have ever been before.

Many of these collectors, of course, are really connoisseurs of printing rather than of literature. And that sort of thing can easily be carried to an extreme. William Morris, the founder of the Kelmscott Press, sinned, I think, in this

regard. Influenced by mediæval craft ideals he strove to make books that should be, as a matter of typography, decoration, binding, content, a rich unity. But he tended to overdo the decorative and to lose sight of the fact that first of all a book is for reading. If it cannot be comfortably read — invite reading, in fact — it becomes a mere *objet d'art*. Will Ransom, in his "Private Presses and their Books" quotes Morris' fellow printer and artist, Charles S. Ricketts, as saying of the Morris "Chaucer": "It should be read at a lectern."

Of the collectors who prefer that sort of book to those more simply made we are likely to think in the derogatory terms of Thorstein Veblen who explains their hobbies in the economic concept of "ostentatiously useless expenditures." Their type is satirized by Bernard Shaw in "St. Joan" where Warwick in his moments of leisure while he waits to trap Joan, has been amusing himself with a book. He is a "collector," and he speaks as follows:

"Now this is what I call workmanship. There is nothing on earth more exquisite than a bonny book, with well-placed columns of rich black writing in beautiful borders, and illuminated pictures cunningly inset. But nowadays instead of looking at books, people read them. A book

might as well be one of those orders for bacon and bran that you are scribbling."

Well, many books have been — but if they were they did not even make pleasant reading. On the other hand Warwick's taste was decadent in that it made a means — for picture and lettering exist for communication — into an end in itself; he reduced a speaking creature into a dumb creature, a thing of meaning into an arabesque.

A beautiful book of course ought to be an arabesque, worth looking at as decoration. But even the most abstract decoration has a suggestion of a meaning in it. And what we should mean by a beautifully printed book is one in which the printing reflects the spirit of the book. For instance I have before me an edition of "The Poems of William Collins," edited by Edmund Blunden and published by Frederick Etchells and Hugh MacDonald of London. Collins lived in the eighteenth century (1721-1759). Now as far as communicating his mere words goes, any type would have been sufficient for the printing of this book. But its designers have added to the significance of the book by printing it in Baskerville — a type face cut by another eighteenth-century Englishman, John Baskerville, in 1750. Of this type, Mr. Daniel

Berkeley Updike tells us, in his great work "Printing Types," that it is charming but artfully so — "genteel." A page set in Baskerville does have a sort of complacency that a Caslon page does not; but that very quality goes well with much of the poetry of Collins who, at his best being timeless, is often not timeless but of the eighteenth century. So, in this particular edition, the type page contributes to the total effect of the poems.

To take another example, I have the Nonesuch edition of "The Temple: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations" by George Herbert. The book is bound in red and silver brocade, with a woven in design; the pages have rubricated borders and the type used is the original face cut by Janson. Now Herbert, let us remember, is an Anglican mystic poet of the seventeenth century. The brocade and the rubricated borders at once suggest the sober magnificence of his religious tradition and the type is admirably adapted to his poetry. It is an antique roman type, very simple and "friendly." It has none of the finicalness of the Baskerville letter. The Nonesuch Press has also issued the poetry of another seventeenth-century mystical poet, Vaughan the Silurist. And Baskerville type has been used. Any one who reads a few pages first of

the Herbert in Janson and then of the Vaughan in Baskerville will see how much more appropriate the former type is for that particular sort of poetry.

As I have said before, Morris went to an extreme in decorating his books. And unfortunately his imitators went beyond the extreme. Because he used plenty of black ink they tried to make beauty out of nothing but black ink. Even the better presses relied too much on "picture" types. I have, for instance, the first edition of T. Sturge Moore's poem, "Danæ" printed by the Ballantyne Press for Charles S. Ricketts in the "King's" type designed by Mr. Ricketts. It is a heavy-faced roman letter, but the designer for some reason has made his lower case "t" a small edition of his capital "T." The result is that as one reads anything in the King's font that unfortunate letter is always bobbing up into the conscious attention — which should be free to devote itself to the poetry.

At the present time, however, the best presses are producing books in which no one feature is exaggerated. To some of them, notably the Nonesuch Press, we are indebted for books that are not only well printed but well edited. Thus the serious student of Blake will have to go to the Nonesuch for the best editions of Blake — the

three-volume one of all the works arranged chronologically, edited by Geoffrey Keynes, and for less exacting purposes, the one-volume edition by the same editor.

The private presses, too, have led the procession in illustrated books. The earliest books were illustrated, of course, by wood-cuts. And such later processes as half-tone engravings, while indispensable for many purposes, always introduce an alien element into the book. They may serve for the realistic depiction of scenes, persons, processes. But from the point of view of the book as a unified expression of a number of contributing crafts, the wood-block gives us the ideal illustration because its lines and masses may be correlated with the black and white of the type page. Some of the most interesting recent work in this kind has been done by the Golden Cockerel Press of Waltham Saint Lawrence, Berkshire, England. Eric Gill, celebrated both as a wood engraver and a sculptor, has illustrated a number of books for this press in wood-cut and in copper etching. One of the most beautiful of their books at the present time is the "Lamia," with other poems, of Keats, with wood engravings by Robert Gibbings. The engravings and the text page, and the ornamental initials by Eric Gill — the last giving the one touch of

color, either red or blue — are effectively correlated.

Naturally such books as this last are expensive, but they are worth the money. They are beautiful to begin with, and they are more likely to hold their value than are the majority of the contemporary first editions which so many people collect. For the value of a modern first edition is quite extrinsic. The author may cease to appeal to the collector for any one of a number of reasons — and down go his prices. But in the beautifully printed book, either illustrated or depending only on typography for its beauty, there is no extrinsic factor — or rather there is a little, due to the small size of the edition — in the value. It is for the most part, however, intrinsic and found in the terms of the actual enjoyment that the book will bring to its possessor.

Few of the readers of this book will be especially interested in typography. But many of them will, I am sure, enjoy having their favorite poets or prose writers in finely printed editions. And it is surprising with what ease one's eye becomes educated to differences in type faces and to proper proportions in the relation of the type matter to the margins and even to the character of the surface of the paper. An easy way to

educate one's self in the differences between type faces is to turn to the end of any book published by Mr. Alfred Knopf. It is his practice to give a little note at the end of his books telling in what type the book is printed and pointing out the general character of the type used. The reader who wishes to go further into the subject will probably find at any large library the volumes to date of "The Fleuron," an annual journal of modern typography edited by Stanley Morrison. A more elementary presentation of the whole subject of book-making will be found in "The Golden Book: The Story of Fine Books and Book Making — Past and Present" by Douglas C. McMurtrie. (Pascal Covici, 1927.) A work reproducing many specimen pages of contemporary books, English, American and foreign, is "Printing of To-Day" by Oliver Simon and Julius Rodenburg, with an introduction by Aldous Huxley. It occurs to me that a suitable ending for this chapter would be to quote what Mr. Huxley has to say about the relation of the type to the book — although I think the connection is so organic that what he says does not quite do it justice:

"A volume of the Penny Classics may give us the sonnets of Shakespeare in their entirety; and for that we may be duly grateful. But it cannot

at the same time give us a work of visual art. In a finely printed edition we have Shakespeare's sonnets *plus* the lovely equivalent of, say, a Persian rug or a piece of Chinese porcelain. The pleasure we should derive from bowl or carpet is added to that which the poetry gives us. At the same time our minds are sensitized by the contemplation of the simple visual beauty of the letters: they are made more susceptible of receiving the other and more complex beauties, all the intellectual and spiritual content, of the verse. For our sensations, our feelings and ideas do not exist independently of one another, but form, as it were, the constituent notes of what is either a discord or a harmony. The state of mind produced by the sight of beautiful letters is in harmony with that created by the reading of good literature. . . ."

THE END

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